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WYANDOTTÉ;

OR,

THE HUTTED KNOLL.

VOL. II.

WYANDOTTE;

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THE HUTTED KNOLL.

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BY J. FENIMORE COOPER, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE PATHFINDER," "DEERSLAYER," "LAST OF THE MOHICANS," "PIONEERS," "PRAIRIE," ETC.

I venerate the Pilgrim's cause,
Yet for the red-man dare to plead;
We bow to Heaven's recorded laws,
He turns to nature for his creed.

SPRAGUE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

KX-C · 423

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1843.

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LONDON:
Printed by S. & J. Bentley, Wilson, and Fley,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

THE HUTTED KNOLL.

CHAPTER I.

Ho! Princes of Jacob! the strength and the stay
Of the daughters of Zion;—now up, and away:
Lo, the hunters have struck her, and bleeding alone
Like a pard in the desert she maketh her moan:
Up with war-horse and banner, with spear and with sword,
On the spoiler go down in the might of the Lord!

LUNT.

THE succeeding fortnight, or three weeks, brought no material changes beyond those connected with the progress of the season. Vegetation was out in its richest luxuriance; the rows of corn and potatoes, freshly hoed, were ornamenting the flats; the wheat and other grains were throwing up their heads; and the meadows were beginning to exchange their flowers for the

seed. As for the forest, it had now veiled its mysteries beneath broad curtains of a green so bright and lively, that one can only meet it beneath a generous sun, tempered by genial rains and a mountain air. The chain-bearers, and other companions of Beekman, quitted the valley the day after the wedding, leaving no one of their party behind but its principal.

The absence of the major was not noted by Joel and his set, in the excitement of receiving so many guests, and in the movement of the wedding. But, as soon as the fact was ascertained, the overseer and miller made the pretence of a "slack-time" in their work, and obtained permission to go to the Mohawk on private concerns of their own. Such journeys were sufficiently common to obviate suspicion; and, the leave granted, the two conspirators started off in company on the morning of the second day, or forty-eight hours after the major and Nick had disappeared. As the latter was known to have come in by the Fort Stanwix route, it was naturally enough supposed that he had returned by the same; and Joel determined to head him on the

Mohawk at some point near Schenectady, where he might make a merit of his own patriotism by betraying the son of his master. The reader is not to suppose Joel intended to do all this openly; so far from it, his plan was to keep himself in the background, while he attracted attention to the supposed Toryism of the captain, and illustrated his own attachment to the colonies.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this plan failed, in consequence of the new path taken by Nick. At the very moment when Joel and the miller were lounging about a Dutch inn some fifteen or twenty miles above Schenectady, in waiting for the travellers to descend the valley of the Mohawk, Robert Willoughby and his guide were actually crossing the Hudson, in momentary security at least. After remaining at his post until satisfied his intended prey had escaped him, Joel, with his friend, returned to the settlement. Still the opportunity had been improved to make himself better acquainted with the real state of the country; to open communications with certain patriots of a moral calibre about equal to his own, but of greater influence; to throw out

divers injurious hints and secret insinuations concerning the captain; and to speculate on the propriety of leaving so important a person to work his will at a time so critical. But the pear was not yet ripe, and all that could now be done was to clear the way a little for something important in future.

In the mean time Evert Beekman, having secured his gentle and true-hearted wife, began, though with a heavy heart, to bethink him of his great political duties. It was well understood that he was to have a regiment of the new levies, and Beulah had schooled her affectionate heart to a degree that permitted her to part with him, in such a cause, with seeming resignation. It was, sooth to say, a curious spectacle to see how these two sisters bent all their thoughts and wishes, in matters of a public nature, to favour the engrossing sentiments of their sex and natures; Maud being strongly disposed to sustain the royal cause, and the bride to support that in which her husband had enlisted, heart and hand.

As for Captain Willoughby, he said little on the subject of politics; but the marriage of Beu-

lah had a powerful influence in confirming his mind in the direction it had taken after the memorable argument with the chaplain. Colonel Beekman was a man of strong good-sense, though without the least brilliancy; and his arguments were all so clear and practical as to carry with them far more weight than was usual in the violent partisan discussions of the period. Beulah fancied him a Solon in sagacity, and a Bacon in wisdom. Her father, without proceeding quite as far as this, was well pleased with his cool discriminating judgment, and much disposed to defer to his opinions. The chaplain was left out of the discussions as incorrigible.

The middle of June was passed at the time Colonel Beekman began to think of tearing himself from his wife, in order to return into the active scenes of preparation he had quitted to make this visit. As usual, the family frequented the lawn at the close of the day; the circumstance of most of the windows of the Hut looking on the court rendering this resort to the open air more agreeable than might otherwise have been the case. Evert was undecided whether to go

the following morning, or to remain a day longer, when the lawn was thus occupied on the evening of the 25th of the month: Mrs. Willoughby making the tea, as usual; her daughters sitting near her, sewing; and the gentlemen at hand, discussing the virtues of different sorts of seed-corn.

"There is a stranger!" suddenly exclaimed the chaplain, looking towards the rocks near the mill, the point at which all arrivals in the valley were first seen from the Hut. "He comes, too, like a man in haste, whatever may be his errand."

"God be praised!" returned the captain, rising; "it is Nick, on his usual trot, and this is about the time he should be back, the bearer of good news. A week earlier might have augured better; but this will do. The fellow moves over the ground as if he really had something to communicate!"

Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters suspended their avocations, and the gentlemen stood in silent expectation, watching the long loping strides of the Tuscarora as he came rapidly across the plain. In a few minutes the Indian came upon the lawn, perfectly in wind, moving with delibe-

ration and gravity as he drew nearer to the party. Captain Willoughby, knowing his man, waited quite another minute after the red man was leaning against an apple-tree before he questioned him.

"Welcome back, Nick!" he then said. "Where did you leave my son?"

"He tell dere," answered the Indian, presenting a note, which the captain read.

"This is all right, Nick; and it shows you have been a true man. Your wages shall be paid to-night. But this letter has been written on the eastern bank of the Hudson, and is quite three weeks old—why have we not seen you sooner?"

"Can't see, when he don't come."

"That is plain enough; but why have you not come back sooner? That is my question."

"Want to look at country—went to shore of Great Salt Lake."

"Oh! Curiosity, then, has been at the bottom of your absence?"

"Nick warrior—no squaw—got no cur'osity."

"No, no; I beg your pardon, Nick; I did

not mean to accuse you of so womanish a feeling. Far from it; I know you are a man. Tell us, however, how far, and whither you went?"

"Bos'on," answered Nick sententiously.

"Boston! That has been a journey indeed. Surely, my son did not allow you to travel in his company through Massachusetts?"

"Nick go alone. Two path; one for major, one for Tuscarora. Nick got dere first."

"That I can believe, if you were in earnest. Were you not questioned by the way?"

"Yes. Tell 'em I 'm Stockbridge — palc-face know no better. T'ink he fox; more like wood-chuck."

"Thank you, Nick, for the compliment. Had my son reached Boston before you came away?"

"Here he be," answered the Indian, producing another missive from the folds of his calico shirt.

The captain received the note, which he read with extreme gravity and some surprise.

"This is in Bob's hand-writing," he said, "and is dated 'Boston, June 18th, 1775;' but it is without signature, and is not only Bob, but Bob Short."

"Read, dear Willoughby!" exclaimed the anxious mother. "News from *him* concerns us all."

"News, Wilhelmina!—They may call this news in Boston, but one is very little the better for it at the Hutted Knoll. However, such as it is, there is no reason for keeping it a secret; while there is *one* reason, at least, why it should be known. This is all: 'My dearest sir,—Thank God, I am unharmed; but we have had much to make us reflect: you know what duty requires. My best and endless love to my mother and Beulah, and dear, laughing, capricious, *pretty* Maud. Nick was present, and can tell you all. I do not think he will 'extenuate, or aught set down in malice.'—And this without direction or signature; with nothing, in fact, but place and date. What say *you* to all this, Nick?"

"He very good—major dere; he know. Nick dere—hot time—a t'ousand scalp—coat red as blood."

"There has been another battle!" exclaimed the captain; "that is too plain to admit of dispute. Speak out at once, Nick: which gained the day—the British or the Americans?"

"Hard to tell — one fight, t'other fight. Red-coat take de ground; Yankee kill. If Yankee could take scalp of all he kill, he whip. But poor warriors at takin' scalp. No know how."

"Upon my word, Woods, there does seem to be something in all this! It can hardly be possible that the Americans would dare to attack Boston, defended as it is by a strong army of British regulars."

"That would they not," cried the chaplain with emphasis. "This has been only another skirmish."

"What you call skirmge?" asked Nick pointedly. "It skirmge to take t'ousand scalp, ha?"

"Tell us what *has* happened, Tuscarora?" said the captain, motioning his friend to be silent.

"Soon tell—soon done. Yankee on hill; reg'lar in canoe. Hundred, t'ousand, fifty canoe—full of red-coat. Great chief dere!—ten—six—two—all go togeder. Come ashore—parade, pale-face manner—march—booh—booh—dem cannon; pop, pop—dem gun. Wah! how he run!"

"Run! Who ran, Nick? Though I suppose it must have been the poor Americans, of course."

"Red-coat run," answered the Indian quietly.

This reply produced a general sensation, even the ladies starting, and gazing at each other.

"Red-coat run!" repeated the captain slowly. "Go on with your history, Nick. Where was this battle fought?"

"T'other Bos'on; over river; go in canoe to fight, like Injin from Canada."

"That must have been in Charlestown, Woods; you may remember Boston is on one

peninsula, and Charlestown on another. Still, I do not recollect that the Americans were in the latter; Beekman, you told me nothing of that."

"They were not so near the royal forces, certainly, when I left Albany, sir," returned the colonel. "A few direct questions to the Indian, however, would bring out the whole truth."

"We must proceed more methodically. How many Yankees were in this fight, Nick? Calculate as we used to do in the French war."

"Reach from here to mill—t'rec, two deep, cap'in. All farmer—no sodger. Carry gun, but no carry baggonet; no carry knapsack. No wear red coat. *Look* like town meetin'—*fight* like devils."

"A line as long as from this to the mill, three deep, would contain about two thousand men, Beekman. Is that what you wish to say, Nick?"

"That about him—pretty near—just so."

"Well, then, there were about two thousand Yankees on this hill; how many King's troops crossed in the canoes to go against them?"

"Two time; one time, so many—t'other time, half so many. Nick close by; count *him*."

"That would make three thousand in all! By George, this does look like work! Did they all go together, Nick?"

"No; one time go first—fight—run away. Den, two time go; fight good deal—run away, too. Den try harder—set fire to wigwam—go up hill; Yankee run away."

"This is plain enough, and quite graphical. Wigwam on fire? Charlestown is not burnt, Nick?"

"Dat he; look like old council fire gone out. Big canoe fire—booh, booh! Nick nebber see such war before—wah! Dead man plenty as leaves on tree; blood run like creek!"

"Were you in this battle, Nick? How came you to learn so much about it?"

"Don't want to be in it; better out; no scalp taken. Red man not'in' to do dere. How know about him? *See* him, dat all. Got eye; why no see him, behind stone wall? Good see, behind stone wall."

"Were you across the water yourself, or did you remain in Boston, and see from a distance?"

"Across in canoe. Tell red-coat, general send

letter by Nick. Major say, he *my* friend,—let Nick go."

"My son was in this bloody battle, then," said Mrs. Willoughby. "He writes, Hugh, that he is safe."

"He does, dearest Wilhelmina; and Bob knows us too well, to attempt deception in such a matter."

"Did you see the major in the field, Nick; —after you crossed the water, I mean?"

"See him all, six — two — seven t'ousand. Close by,—why not see major stand up like pine? No dodge he head, *dere*. Kill all round him; no hurt *him!* Fool to stay dere; tell him so, but he no come away. Save he scalp, too."

"And how many slain do you suppose there might have been left on the ground; or, did you not remain to see?"

"Did see. Stay to get gun, knapsack, oder good t'ing; plenty about; pick him up, fast as want him." Here Nick coolly opened a small bundle, and exhibited an epaulette, several rings, a watch, five or six pairs of silver buckles, and divers other articles of plunder, of which he had

managed to strip the dead. "All good t'ing—plenty as stone; have him widout askin'."

"So I see, Master Nick; and is this the plunder of Englishmen, or of Americans?"

"Red-coat nearest; got most t'ing, too. Go farder, fare worse; as pale-face say."

"Quite satisfactory. Were there more red-coats left on the ground, or more Americans?"

"Red-coat so," said Nick, holding up *four* fingers." Yankee so;" holding up *one*. "Take big grave to hold red-coat. Small grave won't hold Yankee. Hear what he count; most red-coat. More dan t'ousand warrior! British groan like squaw dat lose her hunter."

Such was Saucy Nick's description of the celebrated, and, in some particulars, unrivalled combat of Bunker's Hill, of which he had actually been an eye-witness on the ground, though using the precaution to keep his body well covered. He did not think it necessary to state the fact that he had given the *coup-de-grace*, himself, to the owner of the epaulette; nor did he deem it essential to furnish all the particulars of his mode of obtaining so many buckles. In other respects,

his account was fair enough, "nothing extenuating, or setting down aught in malice." The auditors had listened with intense feeling; and Maud, when the allusion was made to Robert Willoughby, buried her pallid face in her hands, and wept. As for Beulah, again and again she glanced anxiously at her husband, and bethought her of the danger to which he might so soon be exposed.

The receipt of this important intelligence confirmed Beckman in his intention to depart. The very next morning he tore himself away from Beulah, and proceeded to Albany. The appointment of Washington, and a long list of other officers, soon succeeded, including his own as a colonel; and the war may be said to have commenced systematically. Its distant din occasionally reached the Hutted Knoll; but the summer passed away, bringing with it no event to affect the tranquillity of that settlement. Even Joel's schemes were thwarted for a time, and he was fain to continue to wear the mask, and to gather that harvest for another, which he had hoped to reap for his own benefit.

Beulah had all a young wife's fears for her

husband; but, as month succeeded month, and one affair followed another, without bringing him harm, she began to submit to the anxieties inseparable from her situation, with less of self-torment, and more of reason. Her mother and Maud were invaluable friends to her in this novel and trying situation, though each had her own engrossing cares on account of Robert Willoughby. As no other great battle, however, occurred in the course of the year '75, Beekman remained in safety with the troops that invested Boston, and the major with the army within it. Neither was much exposed, and glad enough were these gentle affectionate hearts when they learned that the sea separated the combatants.

This did not occur, however, until another winter was passed. In November the family left the Hut, as had been its practice of late years, and went out into the more inhabited districts to pass the winter. This time it came only to Albany, where Colonel Beekman joined it, passing a few happy weeks with his well-beloved Beulah. The ancient town mentioned was not gay at a moment like that; but it had many young

officers in it, on the American side of the question, who were willing enough to make themselves acceptable to Maud. The captain was not sorry to see several of these youths manifesting assiduity about her he had so long been accustomed to consider as his youngest daughter; for, by this time, his opinions had taken so strong a bias in favour of the rights of the colonies, that Beekman himself scarce rejoiced more whenever he heard of any little success alighting on the American arms.

"It will all come right in the end," the worthy captain used to assure his friend the chaplain. "They will open their eyes at home ere long, and the injustice of taxing the colonies will be admitted. Then all will come round again; the King will be as much beloved as ever, and England and America will be all the better friends for having a mutual respect. I know my countrymen well; they mean right, and will do right, as soon as their stomachs are a little lowered, and they come to look at the truth coolly. I'll answer for it, the Battle of Bunker's Hill made *us*"—the captain had spoken in this way, now, for

some months—" made *us* a thousand advocates where we had one before. This is the nature of John Bull; give him reason to respect you, and he will soon do you justice; but give him reason to feel otherwise, and he becomes a careless, if not a hard master."

Such were the opinions Captain Willoughby entertained of his native land; a land he had not seen in thirty years, and one in which he had so recently inherited unexpected honours, without awakening a desire to return and enjoy them. His opinions were right in part certainly, for they depended on a law of nature; while it is not improbable they were wrong in all that was connected with the notions of any peculiarly manly quality in any particular part of Christendom. No maxim is truer than that which teaches us " like causes produce like effects;" and, as human beings are governed by very similar laws all over the face of this round world of ours, nothing is more certain than the similarity of their propensities.

Maud had no smiles, beyond those extracted by her naturally sweet disposition, and a very pre-

valent desire to oblige, for any of the young soldiers or young civilians who crowded about her chair during the Albany winter mentioned. Two or three of Colonel Beekman's military friends, in particular, would very gladly have become connected with an officer so much respected, through means so exceedingly agreeable; but no encouragement emboldened either to go beyond the attention and assiduities of a marked politeness.

"I know not how it is," observed Mrs. Willoughby, one day, in a *tête-à-tête* with her husband; "Maud seems to take less pleasure than is usual with girls of her years in the attentions of your sex. That her heart is affectionate, warm, even tender, I am very certain; and yet no sign of preference, partiality, or weakness, in favour of any of these fine young men, of whom we see so many, can I discover in the child. They all seem alike to her!"

"Her time will come, as it happened to her mother before her," answered the captain. "Hooping-cough and measles are not more certain to befall children, than love to befall a young woman. You were all made for it, my

dear Willy, and no fear but the girl will catch the disease, one of these days; and that, too, without any inoculation."

"I am sure, I have no wish to separate from my child"—so Mrs. Willoughby always spoke of, and so she always felt towards, Maud—"I am sure, I have no wish to separate from my child; but, as we cannot always remain, it is perhaps better this one should marry, like the other. There is young Verplanck much devoted to her; he is every way a suitable match; and then he is in Evert's own regiment."

"Ay, he would do; though, to my fancy, Luke Herring is the far better match."

"That is because he is richer and more powerful, Hugh. You men cannot think of a daughter's establishment, without immediately dragging in houses and lands as part of the ceremony."

"By George, wife of mine, houses and lands in moderation are very good sweeteners of matrimony!"

"And yet, Hugh, I have been very happy as a wife, nor have you been very miserable as a husband, without any excess of riches to sweeten

the state!" answered Mrs. Willoughby reproachfully. "Had you been a full general, I could not have loved you more than I have done as a mere captain."

"All very true, Wilhelmina, dearest," returned the husband, kissing the faithful partner of his bosom with strong affection; "very true, my dear girl; for girl you are and ever will be in my eyes: but *you* are one in a million, and I humbly trust there are not ten hundred and one in every thousand just like myself. For my part, I wish dear, saucy, capricious little Maud no worse luck in a husband than Luke Herring."

"She will never be *his* wife; I know her, and my own sex, too well to think it. You are wrong, however, Willoughby, in applying such terms to the child. Maud is not in the least capricious, especially in her affections. See with what truth and faithfulness of sisterly attachment she clings to Bob. I do declare that I am often ashamed to feel that even his own mother has less solicitude about him than this dear girl."

"Pooh, Willy! don't be afflicted with the

idea that you don't make yourself sufficiently miserable about the boy. Bob will do well enough, and will very likely come out of this affair a lieutenant-colonel. I may live yet to see him a general officer; certainly, if I live to be as old as my grandfather, Sir Thomas. As for Maud, she finds Beulah uneasy about Beekman; and having no husband herself, or any lover that she cares a straw about, why she just falls upon Bob as a *pis aller*. I'll warrant you she cares no more for him than any of the rest of us—than myself, for instance; though, as an old soldier, I don't scream every time I fancy a gun fired over yonder at Boston."

"I wish it were well over. It is *so* unnatural for Evert and Robert to be on opposite sides."

"Yes, it is out of the common way, I admit; and yet 'twill all come round in the long run. This Mr. Washington is a clever fellow, and seems to play his cards with spirit and judgment. He was with us in that awkward affair of Braddock's; and between you and me, Wilhelmina, he covered the regulars, or we should all have laid our bones on that accursed field. I wrote you at the time

what I thought of him, and now you see it is all coming to pass."

It was one of the captain's foibles to believe himself a political prophet; and, as he had really both written and spoken highly of Washington at the time mentioned, it had no small influence on his opinions to find himself acting on the same side with this admired favourite. Prophecies often produce their own fulfilment in cases of much greater gravity than this, and it is not surprising that our captain found himself strengthened in his notions by the circumstance.

The winter passed away without any of Maud's suitors making a visible impression on her heart. In March the English evacuated Boston; Robert Willoughby sailing with his regiment for Halifax, and thence with the expedition against Charlestown under Sir Henry Clinton. The next month the family returned to the Knoll, where it was thought wiser and even safer to be, at a moment so critical, than even in a more frequented place. The war proceeded, and, to the captain's great regret, without any very visible approaches towards the

reconciliation he had so confidently anticipated. This rather checked his warmth in favour of the colonial cause; for, an Englishman by birth, he was much opposed at bottom to anything like a dissolution of the tie that connected America with the mother country; a political event that now began seriously to be talked of among the initiated.

Desirous of thinking as little as possible of disagreeable things, the worthy owner of the valley busied himself with his crops, his mills, and his improvements. He had intended to commence leasing his wild lands about this time, and to begin a more extended settlement, with an eye to futurity; but the state of the country forbade the execution of the project, and he was fain to limit his efforts by their former boundaries. The geographical position of the valley put it beyond any of the ordinary exactions of military service; and, as there was a little doubt thrown around its owner's opinions, partly in consequence of his son's present and his own previous connection with the royal army, and partly on account of Joel's secret machinations, the authorities were

well content to let the settlement alone, provided it would take care of itself. Notwithstanding the prominent patriotism of Joel Strides and the miller, they were well satisfied themselves with this state of things; preferring peace and quietness to the more stirring scenes of war. Their schemes, moreover, had met with somewhat of a check in the feeling of the population of the valley, which, on an occasion calculated to put their attachment to its owner to the proof, had rather shown that they remembered his justice, liberality, and upright conduct, more than exactly comported with their longings. This manifestation of respect was shown at an election for a representative in a local convention, in which every individual at the Hutted Knoll who had a voice at all, the two conspirators excepted, had given it in favour of the captain. So decided was this expression of feeling, indeed, that it compelled Joel and the miller to chime in with the cry of the hour, and to vote contrary to their own wishes.

One, dwelling at the Hutted Knoll in the summer of 1776, could never have imagined that

he was a resident of a country convulsed by a revolution, and disfigured by war. There, everything seemed peaceful and calm; the woods sighing with the airs of their sublime solitude, the genial sun shedding its heats on a grateful and generous soil, vegetation ripening and yielding with all the abundance of a bountiful nature, as in the more tranquil days of peace and hope.

"There is something frightful in the calm of this valley, Beulah!" exclaimed Maud one Sunday, as she and her sister looked out of the library window amid the breathing stillness of the forest, listening to the melancholy sound of the bell that summoned them to prayers. "There is a frightful calm over this place, at an hour when we know that strife and bloodshed are so active in the country. Oh that the hateful Congress had never thought of making this war!"

"Evert writes me all is well, Maud; that the times will lead to good, the people are right, and America will now be a nation—in time, he thinks, a great, and a very great nation."

"Ah! it is this ambition of greatness that hurries them all on! Why can they not be

satisfied with being respectable subjects of so great a country as England, that they must destroy each other for this phantom of liberty? Will it make them wiser, or happier, or better than they are?"

Thus reasoned Maud, under the influence of one engrossing sentiment. As our tale proceeds, we shall have occasion to show, perhaps, how far was that submission to events, which she inculcated, from the impulses of her true character. Beulah answered mildly, but it was more as a young American wife:

"I know Evert thinks it all right, Maud; and you will own he is neither fiery nor impetuous. If *his* cool judgment approve of what has been done, we may well suppose that it has not been done in too much haste, or needlessly."

"Think, Beulah," rejoined Maud, with an ashen cheek and in trembling tones, "that Evert and Robert may, at this very moment, be engaged in strife against each other. The last messenger who came in brought us the miserable tidings that Sir William Howe was

landing a large army near New York, and that the Americans were preparing to meet it. We are certain that Bob is with his regiment; and his regiment, we know, is in the army. How can we think of this liberty at a moment so critical?"

Beulah did not reply; for in spite of her quiet nature, and implicit confidence in her husband, she could not escape a woman's solicitude. The colonel had promised to write at every good occasion, and that which he promised was usually performed. She thought, and thought rightly, that a very few days would bring them intelligence of importance; though it came in a shape she had little anticipated, and by a messenger she had then no desire to see.

In the mean time, the season and its labours advanced. August was over, and September with its fruits had succeeded, promising to bring the year round without any new or extraordinary incidents to change the fortunes of the inmates of the Hutted Knoll. Beulah had now been married more than a twelvemonth, and was al-

ready a mother; and of course all that time had elapsed since the son quitted his father's house. Nick, too, had disappeared shortly after his return from Boston; and, throughout this eventful summer, his dark, red countenance had not been seen in the valley.

CHAPTER II.

And now 'tis still ! no sound to wake
The primal forest's awful shade ;
And breathless lies the covert brake,
Where many an ambush'd form is laid :
I see the red-man's gleaming eye ;
Yet all so hushed the gloom profound,
That summer birds flit heedlessly,
And mocking nature smiles around.

LUNT.

THE eventful summer of 1776 had been genial and generous in the valley of the Hutted Knoll. With a desire to drive away obtrusive thoughts, the captain had been much in his fields ; and he was bethinking himself of making a large contribution to the good cause, in the way of fatted porkers, of which he had an unusual number, that he thought might yet be driven through the forest to Fort Stanwix before the season closed. In the way of intelli-

gence from the seat of war, nothing had reached the family but a letter from the major, which he had managed to get sent, and in which he wrote with necessary caution. He merely mentioned the arrival of Sir William Howe's forces, and the state of his own health. There was a short postscript, in the following words, the letter having been directed to his father:—"Tell dearest Maud," he said, "that charming women have ceased to charm me; glory occupying so much of my day-dreams, like an *ignis fatuus*, I fear: and that, as for love, *all* my affections are centred in the dear objects at the Hutted Knoll. If I had met with a single woman I admired half as much as I do her pretty self, I should have been married long since." This was written in answer to some thoughtless rattle that the captain had volunteered to put in his last letter as coming from Maud, who had sensitively shrunk from sending a message when asked; and it was read by father, mother, and Beulah, as the *badinage* of a brother to a sister, without awakening a second thought in either. Not so with Maud herself, however.

When her seniors had done with this letter, she carried it to her own room, reading and re-reading it a dozen times: nor could she muster resolution to return it; but, finding at length that the epistle was forgotten, she succeeded in retaining it without awakening attention to what she had done. This letter now became her constant companion, and a hundred times did the sweet girl trace its characters in the privacy of her chamber, or in that of her now solitary walks in the woods.

As yet, the war had produced none of those scenes of ruthless frontier violence that had distinguished all the previous conflicts of America. The enemy was on the coast, and thither the efforts of the combatants had been principally directed. It is true, an attempt on Canada had been made, but it failed for want of means; neither party being in a condition to effect much, as yet, in that quarter. The captain had commented on this peculiarity of the present struggle; all those which had preceded it having, as a matter of course, taken the direction of the frontiers between the hostile provinces.

"There is no use, Woods, in bothering ourselves about these things, after all," observed Captain Willoughby, one day, when the subject of hanging the long-neglected gates came up between them. "It 's a heavy job, and the crops will suffer if we take off the hands this week. We are as safe here as we should be in Hyde Park; and safer too, for there housebreakers and foot-pads abound; whereas, *your* preaching has left nothing but very vulgar and every-day sinners at the Knoll."

The chaplain had little to say against this reasoning; for, to own the truth, he saw no particular cause for apprehension. Impunity had produced the feeling of security, until these gates had got to be rather a subject of amusement than of any serious discussion. The preceding year, when the stockade was erected, Joel had managed to throw so many obstacles in the way of hanging the gates, that the duty was not performed throughout the whole of the present summer; the subject having been mentioned but once or twice, and then only to be postponed to a more fitting occasion.

As yet, no one in the valley knew of the great event which had taken place in July. A rumour of a design to declare the provinces independent had reached the Hut in May; but the major's letter was silent on this important event, and positive information had arrived by no other channel: otherwise, the captain would have regarded the struggle as much more serious than he had ever done before, and he might have set about raising these all-important gates in earnest. As it was, however, there they stood; each pair leaning against its proper wall or stockade, though those of the latter were so light as to have required but eight or ten men to set them on their hinges in a couple of hours at most.

Captain Willoughby still confined his agricultural schemes to the site of the old Beaver Pond. The area of that was perfectly beautiful, —every unsightly object having been removed,— while the fences and the tillage were faultlessly neat and regular. Care had been taken, too, to render the few small fields around the cabins which skirted this lovely rural scene worthy of

their vicinage; the stumps had all been dug out, the surfaces levelled, and the orchards and gardens were in keeping with the charms that nature had so bountifully scattered about the place.

While, however, all in the shape of tillage was confined to this one spot, the cattle ranged the forest for miles. Not only the valley, but the adjacent mountain-sides were covered with intersecting paths, beaten by the herds in the course of years. These paths led to many a glen, or a beautiful prospect, where Beulah and Maud had long been in the habit of pursuing their rambles during the sultry heats of summer. Though so beautiful to the eye, the flats were not agreeable for walks; and it was but natural for the lovers of the picturesque to seek the eminences, where they could overlook the vast surfaces of leaves that were spread before them, or to bury themselves in ravines and glens, within which the rays of the sun scarce penetrated. The paths mentioned led near, or to, a hundred of these places, all within a mile or two of the Hut. As a matter of course, then, they were not neglected.

Beulah had now been a mother several months. Her little Evert was born at the Knoll, and he occupied most of those gentle and affectionate thoughts which were not engrossed by his absent father. Her marriage, of itself, had made some changes in her intercourse with Maud; but the birth of the child had brought about still more. The care of this little being formed Beulah's great delight; and Mrs. Willoughby had all that peculiar interest in her descendant which marks a grandmother's irresponsible love. These two passed half their time in the nursery, a room fitted between their respective chambers; leaving Maud more alone than it was her wont to be, and of course to brood over her thoughts and feelings. These periods of solitude our heroine was much accustomed to pass in the forest. Use had so far emboldened her, that apprehension never shortened her walks, or lessened their pleasure. Of danger from any ordinary source, there was literally next to none; man never having been known to approach the valley, unless by the regular path: while the beasts of prey had been so actively hunted as rarely to be seen in

that quarter of the country. The panther excepted, no wild quadruped was to be in the least feared in summer; and, of the first, none had ever been met with by Nick, or any of the numerous woodsmen who had now frequented the adjacent hills for two lustrums.

About three hours before the setting of the sun on the evening of the 23rd of September, 1776, Maud Willoughby was pursuing her way, quite alone, along one of the paths beaten by the cattle, at some little distance from a rocky eminence, where there was a look-out, on which Mike, by her father's orders, had made a rude seat. It was on the side of the clearing most remote from all the cabins; though, once on the elevation, she could command a view of the whole of the little panorama around the site of the ancient pond. In that day, ladies wore the well-known gipsy-hat, a style which was peculiarly suited to the face of our heroine. Exercise had given her cheeks a rich glow; and though a shade of sadness, or at least of reflection, was now habitually thrown over her sweet countenance, this bloom added an unusual lustre to her eyes, and a bril-

liancy to her beauty, that the proudest belle of any drawing-room might have been glad to possess. Although living so retired, her dress always became her rank; being simple, but of the character that denotes refinement, and the habits and tastes of a gentlewoman. In this particular Maud had ever been observant of what was due to herself, and more than all had she attended to her present appearance since a chance expression of Robert Willoughby's had betrayed how much he prized the quality in her.

Looking thus, and in a melancholy frame of mind, Maud reached the rock, and took her place on its simple seat, throwing aside her hat, to catch a little of the cooling air on her burning cheeks. She turned to look at the lovely view again, with a pleasure that never tired. The rays of the sun were streaming athwart the verdant meadows and rich corn, lengthening the shadows, and mellowing everything, as if expressly to please the eye of one like her who now gazed upon the scene. Most of the people of the settlement were in the open air; the men closing their day's work in the fields, and the women and

children busied beneath shades with their wheels and needles; the whole presenting such a picture of peaceful, rural life, as a poet might delight to describe, or an artist to delineate with his pencil.

> The landscape smiles
> Calm in the sun; and silent are the hills
> And valleys, and the blue serene of air.
> *The Vanished Lark.*

"It is very beautiful!" thought Maud. "Why cannot men be content with such scenes of loveliness and nature as this, and love each other, and be at peace, as God's laws command? Then we might all be living happily together here, without trembling lest news of some sad misfortune should reach us from hour to hour. Beulah and Evert would not be separated, but both could remain with their child; and my dear, dear father and mother would be so happy to have us all around them in security; and then Bob, too, perhaps Bob might bring a wife from the town with him, whom I could love as I do Beulah."—It was one of Maud's day-dreams to love the wife of Bob, and make him happy by contributing to the happiness of those he most prized.—"No; I could never love her

as I do *Beulah;* but I should make her very dear to me, as I ought, since she would be Bob's wife."

The expression of Maud's face towards the close of this mental soliloquy was of singular sadness; and yet it was the very picture of sincerity and truth. It was some such look as the windows of the mind assume when the feelings struggle, against nature and hope, for resignation and submission to duty.

At this instant a cry arose from the valley! It was one of those spontaneous, involuntary outbreakings of alarm which no art can imitate, no pen describe, but which conveys to the listener's ear terror in the very sound. At the next instant the men from the mill were seen rushing up to the summit of the cliff that impended over their dwellings, followed by their wives dragging children after them, making frantic gestures, indicative of alarm. The first impulse of Maud was to fly; but a moment's reflection told her it was much too late for that. To remain, and witness what followed, would be safer and more wise. Her dress was dark, and she would not be likely to

be observed at the distance at which she was placed; having behind her, too, a back-ground of gloomy rock. Then the scene was too exciting to admit of much hesitation or delay in coming to a decision, a fearful species of maddened curiosity mingling with her alarm. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that Maud continued gazing on what she saw, with eyes that seemed to devour the objects before them.

The first cry from the valley was followed by the appearance of the fugitives from the mill. These took the way towards the Hut, calling on the nearest labourers by name to seek safety in flight. The words could not be distinguished at the rock, though indistinct sounds might; but the gestures could not be mistaken. In half a minute the plain was alive with fugitives, some rushing to their cabins for their children, and all taking the direction of the stockade as soon as the last were found. In five minutes the roads and lanes near the Knoll were crowded with men, women, and children, hastening forward to its protection; while a few of the former had already

rushed through the gateways, as Maud correctly fancied, in quest of their arms.

Captain Willoughby was riding among his labourers when this fearful interruption to a tranquillity so placid first broke upon his ear. Accustomed to alarms, he galloped forward to meet the fugitives from the mill, issuing orders as he passed to several of the men nearest the house. With the miller, who thought little of anything but safety at that instant, he conversed a moment, and then pushed boldly on towards the verge of the cliffs. Maud trembled as she saw her father in a situation which she thought must be so exposed; but his cool manner of riding about proved that he saw no enemy very near. At length he waved his hat to some object or person in the glen beneath, and she even thought she heard his shout. At the next moment he turned his horse, and was seen scouring along the road towards the Hut. The lawn was covered with the fugitives as the captain reached it, while a few armed men were already coming out of the court-yard. Gesticulating as if giving orders, the

captain dashed through them all, without drawing the rein, and disappeared in the court. A minute later, he re-issued, bearing his arms, followed by his wife and Beulah, the latter pressing little Evert to her bosom.

Something like order now began to appear among the men. Counting all ages and both colours, the valley, at this particular moment could muster thirty-three males capable of bearing arms. To these might be added some ten or fifteen women, who had occasionally brought down a deer, and who might be thought more or less dangerous, stationed at a loop, with a rifle or a musket. Captain Willoughby had taken some pains to drill the former, who could go through some of the simpler light-infantry evolutions. Among them he had appointed sundry corporals, while Joel Strides had been named a sergeant. Joyce, now an aged and war-worn veteran, did the duty of adjutant. Twenty men were soon drawn up in array, in front of the open gateway on the lawn, under the immediate orders of Joyce; and the last woman and child who had been seen approaching the place of refuge had passed within

the stockade. At this instant Captain Willoughby called a party of the stragglers around him, and set about hanging the gates of the outer passage, or that which led through the palisades.

Maud would now have left the rock, but at that moment a dark body of Indians poured up over the cliffs, crowning it with a menacing cloud of at least fifty armed warriors. The rivulet lay between her and the Hut, and the nearest bridge that crossed it would have brought her within reach of danger. Then it would require at least half an hour to reach that bridge by the circuitous path she would be compelled to take, and there was little hope of getting over it before the strangers should have advanced. It was better to remain where she could behold what was passing, and to be governed by events, than to rush blindly into unseen risks.

The party that crowned the cliffs near the mills showed no impatience to advance. It was evidently busy in reconnoitring, and in receiving accessions to its numbers. The latter soon increased to some seventy or eighty warriors. After waiting several minutes in inaction,

a musket, or rifle, was fired towards the Hut, as if to try the effect of a summons and the range of a bullet. At this hint the men on the lawn retired within the stockade, stacked their arms, and joined the party that was endeavouring to get the gates in their places. From the circumstance that her father directed all the women and children to retire within the court, Maud supposed that the bullet might have fallen somewhere near them. It was quite evident, however, that no one was injured.

The gates intended for the stockade, being open like the rest of that work, were materially lighter than those constructed for the house itself. The difficulty was in handling them with the accuracy required to enter the hinges, of which there were three pairs. This difficulty existed on account of their great height. Of physical force enough could be applied to toss them over the stockade itself, if necessary; but finesse was needed rather than force to effect the principal object, and that under difficult circumstances. It is scarcely possible that the proximity of so fierce an

enemy as a body of savages in their war-paint—for such the men at the mill had discovered was the guise of their assailants—would in any measure favour the coolness and tact of the labourers. Poor Maud lost the sense of her own danger, in the nervous desire to see the long-forgotten gates hung; and she rose once or twice in feverish excitement as she saw that the leaf which was raised fell in or out, missing its fastenings. Still the men persevered, one or two sentinels being placed to watch the Indians, and give timely notice of their approach, should they advance.

Maud now kneeled, with her face bowed to the seat, and uttered a short but most fervent prayer in behalf of the dear beings whom the Hut contained. This calmed her spirits a little, and she rose once more to watch the course of events. The body of men had left the gate at which they had just been toiling, and were crowding around its fellow. One leaf was hung! As an assurance of this, she soon after saw her father swing it backward and forward on its hinges, to cause it to settle

into its place. This was an immense relief; though she had heard too many tales of Indian warfare, to think there was any imminent danger of an attack by open day in the very face of the garrison. The cool manner in which her father proceeded satisfied her that he felt the same security for the moment; his great object being, in truth, to make suitable provision against the hours of darkness.

Although Maud had been educated as a lady, and possessed the delicacy and refinement of her class, she had unavoidably caught some of the fire and resolution of a frontier life. To her, the forest, for instance, possessed no fancied dangers; but, when there was real ground for alarm, she estimated its causes intelligently, and with calmness. So it was also in the present crisis. She remembered all she had been taught, or had heard; and, quick of apprehension, her information was justly applied to the estimate of present circumstances.

The men at the Hut soon had the second

leaf of the gate ready to be raised. At this instant an Indian advanced across the flat alone, bearing a branch of a tree in his hand, and moving swiftly. This was a flag of truce, desiring to communicate with the pale-faces. Captain Willoughby met the messenger alone, at the foot of the lawn, and there a conference took place that lasted several minutes. Maud could only conjecture its objects, though she thought her father's attitude commanding, and his gestures stern. The redman, as usual, was quiet and dignified. This much our heroine saw, or fancied she saw; but beyond this, of course, all was vague conjecture. Just as the two were about to part, and had even made courteous signs of their intention, a shout arose from the workmen, which ascended, though faintly, as high as the rock. Captain Willoughby turned, and then Maud saw his arm extended towards the stockade. The second leaf of the gate was in its place, swinging to and fro, in a sort of exulting demonstration of its uses! The savage moved away, more slowly than he had

advanced, occasionally stopping to reconnoitre the Knoll and its defences.

Captain Willoughby now returned to his people; and he was some time busied in examining the gates, and giving directions about the fastenings. Utterly forgetful of her own situation, Maud shed tears of joy, as she saw that this great object was successfully effected. The stockade was an immense security to the people of the Hut. Although it certainly might be scaled, such an enterprise would require great caution, courage, and address; and it could hardly be effected at all by day-light. At night, even, it would allow the sentinels time to give the alarm; and, with a vigilant look-out, might be the means of repelling an enemy. There was also another consideration connected with this stockade: an enemy would not be fond of trusting himself *inside* of it, unless reasonably certain of carrying the citadel altogether; inasmuch as it might serve as a prison to place him in the hands of the garrison. To recross it under a fire from the loops would be an exploit so hazardous that few Indians would think

of undertaking it. All this Maud knew from her father's conversations, and she saw how much had been obtained in raising the gates. Then the stockade, once properly closed, afforded great security to those moving about within it: the timbers would be apt to stop a bullet, and were a perfect defence against a rush; leaving time to the women and children to get into the court, even allowing that the assailants succeeded in scaling the palisades.

Maud thought rapidly and well in the strait in which she was placed. She understood most of the movements on both sides; and she also saw the importance of her remaining where she could note all that passed, if she intended to make an attempt at reaching the Hut after dark. This necessity determined her to continue at the rock so long as light remained. She wondered she was not missed, but rightly attributed the circumstance to the suddenness of the alarm, and the crowd of other thoughts which would naturally press upon the minds of her friends at such a fearful moment. "I will stay where I am," thought Maud, a little

proudly; "and prove, if I am not really the daughter of Hugh Willoughby, that I am not altogether unworthy of his love and care! I can even pass the night in the forest, at this warm season, without suffering."

Just as these thoughts crossed her mind in a sort of mental soliloquy, a stone rolled from a path above her, and fell over the rock on which the seat was placed. A footstep was then heard, and the girl's heart beat quick with apprehension. Still she conceived it safest to remain perfectly quiet. She scarce breathed, in her anxiety to be motionless. Then it occurred to her that some one beside herself might be out from the Hut, and that a friend was near. Mike had been in the woods that very afternoon, she knew, for she had seen him; and the true-hearted fellow would indeed be a treasure to her at that awful moment. This idea, which rose almost to certainty as soon as it occurred, induced her to spring forward; when the appearance of a man, whom she did not recognise, dressed in a hunting-shirt, and otherwise attired for the woods, carrying a short rifle in the hol-

low of his arm, caused her to stop in motionless terror. At first her presence was not observed; but no sooner did the stranger catch a glimpse of her person than he stopped, raised his hands in surprise, laid his rifle against a tree, and sprang forward: the girl closing her eyes, and sinking on the seat with bowed head, expecting the blow of the deadly tomahawk.

"Maud, dearest, *dearest* Maud, do you not know me?" exclaimed one, leaning over the pallid girl, while he passed an arm round her slender waist with an affection so delicate and reserved, that, at another time, it might have attracted attention. "Look up, dear girl, and show that at least you fear not *me!*"

"Bob!" said the half-senseless Maud. "Whence come you? *Why* do you come at this fearful instant? Would to God your visit had been better timed!"

"Terror makes you say this, my poor Maud! Of all the family, I had hoped for the warmest welcome from *you*. We think alike about this war. Then you are not so much terrified at the idea of my being found here, but can hear

reason. Why do you say this, then, my dearest Maud?"

By this time Maud had so far recovered as to be able to look up into the major's face, with an expression in which alarm was blended with unutterable tenderness. Still she did not throw her arms around him, as a sister would clasp a beloved brother; but, rather, as he pressed her gently to his bosom, repelled the embrace by a slight resistance. Extricating herself, however, she turned, and pointed towards the valley.

"Why do I say this? See for yourself:—the savages have at length come, and the whole dreadful picture is before you."

Young Willoughby's military eye took in the scene at a glance. The Indians were still at the cliff, and the people of the settlement were straining at the heavier gates of the Hut, having already got one of them into a position where it wanted only the proper application of a steady force to be hung. He saw his father actively employed in giving directions, and a few pertinent questions drew all the other circumstances

from Maud. The enemy had now been in the valley more than an hour, and the movements of the two parties were soon related.

"Are you alone, dearest Maud? are you shut out by this sudden inroad?" demanded the major with concern and surprise.

"So it would seem. I can see no other—though I did think Michael might be somewhere near me in the woods here; I at first mistook your footsteps for his."

"That is a mistake," returned Willoughby, levelling a small pocket spy-glass at the Hut. "Mike is tugging at that gate, upholding a part of it, like a corner-stone. I see most of the faces I know there; and my dear father is as active, and yet as cool, as if at the head of a regiment."

"Then I am alone;—it is perhaps better that as many as possible should be in the house to defend it."

"Not alone, my sweet Maud, so long as I am with you. Do you still think my visit so ill-timed?"

"Perhaps not, after all. Heaven knows what I should have done, by myself, when it became dark!"

"But are we safe on this seat? May we not be seen by the Indians, since we so plainly see them?"

"I think not. I have often remarked that, when Evert and Beulah have been here, their figures could not be perceived from the lawn, owing, I fancy, to the dark back-ground of rock. My dress is not light, and you are in green, which is the colour of the leaves, and not easily to be distinguished. No other spot gives so good a view of what takes place in the valley. We must risk a little exposure, or act in the dark."

"You are a soldier's daughter, Maud."—This was as true of Major Meredith as of Captain Willoughby, and might therefore be freely said by even Bob.—"You are a soldier's daughter, and nature has clearly intended you to be a soldier's wife. This is a *coup-d'-œil* not to be despised."

"I shall never be a wife at all," murmured Maud, scarce knowing what she said; "I may

not live to be a soldier's daughter, even, much longer. But why are *you* here? — Surely, surely *you* can have no connexion with those savages! I have heard of such horrors! But *you* would not accompany *them*, even though it were to *protect* the Hut!"

"I 'll not answer for that, Maud. One would do a great deal to preserve his paternal dwelling from pillage, and his father's grey hairs from violence. But I came alone, that party and its objects being utterly strangers to me."

"And *why* do you come at all, Bob?" inquired the anxious girl, looking up into his face with open affection. "The situation of the country is now such as to make your visits very hazardous."

"Who could know the regular major in this hunting-shirt and forest garb? I have not an article about my person to betray me, even were I before a court. No fear for me, then, Maud; unless it be from these demons in human shape, the savages. Even they do not seem to be very fiercely inclined, as they appear at this moment more disposed to eat than to attack the Hut.

Look for yourself: those fellows are certainly preparing to take their food; the group that is just now coming over the cliffs is dragging a deer after it."

Maud took the glass, though with an unsteady hand, and she looked a moment at the savages. The manner in which the instrument brought these wild beings nearer to her eye caused her to shudder, and she was soon satisfied.

"That deer was killed this morning by the miller," she said; "they have doubtless found it in or near his cabin. We will be thankful, however, for this breathing time; it may enable my dear father to get up the other gate. Look, Robert, and see what progress they make!"

"One side is just hung, and much joy does it produce among them. Persevere, my noble old father, and you will soon be safe against your enemies. What a calm and steady air he has amid it all! Ah! Maud, Hugh Willoughby ought at this moment to be at the head of a brigade, helping to suppress this accursed and unnatural rebellion. Nay, more; he *may* be there, if he will only listen to reason and duty."

"And *this* is then your errand here, Bob?" asked his fair companion, gazing earnestly at the major.

"It is, Maud; and I hope you, whose feelings I know to be right, can encourage me to hope."

"I fear not. It is now too late. Beulah's marriage with Evert has strengthened his opinions: and then ——"

"What, dearest Maud? You pause as if that *then* had a meaning you hesitated to express."

Maud coloured; after which she smiled faintly, and proceeded:

"We should speak reverently of a father — and such a father, too. But does it not seem probable to you, Bob, that the many discussions he has with Mr. Woods may have a tendency to confirm each in his notions?"

Robert Willoughby would have answered in the affirmative, had not a sudden movement at the Hut prevented.

CHAPTER III.

From Floddeir ridge
The Scots beheld the English host
Leave Barmore wood, their evening post,
And heedful watched them as they crossed
The Till by Twisal Bridge.

SCOTT.

IT was just at this instant that most of the women of the settlement rushed from the court, and spread themselves within the stockade; Mrs. Willoughby and Beulah being foremost in the movement. The captain left the gate, too; and even the men, who were just about to raise the last leaf, suspended their toil. It was quite apparent some new cause for uneasiness or alarm had suddenly arisen among them. Still the stack of arms remained untouched, nor was there any new demonstration among the Indians. The major

watched everything with intense attention through the glass.

"What is it, dear Bob?" demanded the anxious Maud. "I see my dearest mother; she seems alarmed."

"Was it known to her that you were about to quit the house, when you came out on this walk?"

"I rather think not. She and Beulah were in the nursery with little Evert, and my father was in the fields. I came out without speaking to any person, nor did I meet any before entering the forest."

"Then you are now first missed. Yes, that is it; and no wonder, Maud, it creates alarm. Merciful God! How must they all feel at a moment like this!"

"Fire your rifle, Bob, that will draw their eyes in this direction; and I will wave my handkerchief, perhaps *that* might be seen. Beulah has received such signals from me before."

"It would never do. No: we must remain concealed, watching their movements, in order to be able to aid them at the proper time. It is

painful to endure this suspense, beyond a doubt; but the pain must be borne in order to ensure the safety of one who is so very, very precious to us all."

Notwithstanding the fearful situation in which she was placed, Maud felt soothed by these words. The language of affection, as coming from Robert Willoughby, was very dear to her at all times, and never more than at a moment when it appeared that even her life was suspended, as it might be, by a hair.

"It is as you say," she answered gently, giving him her hand with much of her ancient frankness of manner; "we should be betrayed, and of course lost.—But what means the movement at the Hut?"

There was indeed a movement within the stockade. Maud's absence was now clearly ascertained, and it is needless to describe the commotion the circumstance produced. No one thought any longer of the half of the gate that still remained to be hung, but every supposable part of the house and enclosure had been examined in quest of her who was missing. Our

heroine's last remark, however, was produced by certain indications of an intention to make a descent from one of the external windows of the common parlour; a room, it will be remembered, that stood on the little cliff, above the rivulet that wound beneath its base. This cliff was about forty feet high; and, though it offered a formidable obstacle to any attempt to scale it, there was no great difficulty in an active man's descending, aided by a rope. The spot, too, was completely concealed from the view of the party, which still remained on the rock, near the mill, at a distance of quite half a mile from the gates of the stockade. This fact greatly facilitated the little sortie, since, once in the bed of the rivulet, which was fringed with bushes, it would be very practicable, by following its windings, to gain the forest unseen. The major levelled his glass at the windows, and immediately saw the truth of all that has here been mentioned.

"They are preparing to send a party out," he said, "and doubtless in quest of you, Maud. The thing is very feasible, provided the savages

remain much longer in their present position. It is matter of surprise to me, that the last have not sent a force in the rear of the Hut, where the windows are at least exposed to fire, and the forest is so close as to afford a cover to the assailants. In front there is literally none, but a few low fences; which is the reason, I presume, that they keep so much aloof."

"It is not probable they know the valley. With the exception of Nick, but few Indians have ever visited us, and that rarely. Those we have seen have all been of the most peaceable and friendly tribes; not a true warrior, as my father says, ever having been found among them. Nick is the only one of them all who can thus be termed."

"Is it possible that fellow has led this party? I have never more than half confided in him; and yet he is too old a friend of the family, I should think, to be guilty of such an act of baseness."

"My father thinks him a knave, but I question if he has an opinion of him as bad as that. Besides, *he* knows the valley, and would have

led the Indians round into the rear of the house, if it be a place so much more favourable for the attack, as you suppose. These wretches have come by the common paths, all of which first strike the river, as you know, below the mills."

"That is true. I lost my way a few miles from this, the path being very blind on the eastern route, which I travelled as having gone it last with Nick, and thinking it the safest. Fortunately I recognised the crest of this mountain above us, by its shape, or I might never have found my way; although the streams, when struck, are certain guides to the woodsman. As soon as I hit the cow-paths, I knew they would lead me to the barns and sheds.—See! a man is actually descending from a window!"

"Oh! Bob, I hope it is not my father! He is too old: it is risking too much to let him quit the house."

"I will tell you better when he reaches the ground. Unless mistaken—ay, it is the Irishman, O'Hearn."

"Honest Mike! He is always *foremost* in everything, though he so little knows how any-

thing but digging ought to be done. Is there not another following him, or am I deceived?"

"There is; he has just reached the ground, too. This might be spared, did they know how well you are guarded, Maud, — by one who would die cheerfully to prevent harm from reaching you!"

"They little dream of that, Bob," answered Maud in a low tone. "Not a human being in that valley fancies you nearer to him than the royal armies are, at this moment. But they do not send a third; I am glad they weaken their own force no further."

"It is certainly best they should not. The men had their rifles slung when they descended, and they are now getting them ready for service. It is Joel Strides who is with Mike."

"I am sorry for it. *That* is a man I little like, Bob, and I should be sorry he knew of your being here."

This was said quickly, and with a degree of feeling that surprised the major, who questioned Maud earnestly as to her meaning and its reasons. The latter told him she scarcely knew herself;

that she disliked the man's manner, had long thought his principles bad, and that Mike in his extraordinary way had said certain things to her to awaken distrust.

"Mike speaks in hieroglyphics," said the major laughing, in spite of the serious situation in which he and his companion were placed, "and one must never be too sure of *his* meaning. Joel has now been many years with my father, and he seems to enjoy his confidence."

"He makes himself useful, and is very guarded in what he says at the Hut. Still, I wish him not to know of your being here."

"It will not be easy to prevent it, Maud. I should have come boldly into the valley, but for this accidental meeting with you, trusting that my father has no one about him so base as to betray his son."

"Trust not Joel Strides. I'll answer for Mike with my life, but sorry indeed should I be that Joel Strides knew of your being among us. It were better, perhaps, that most of the workmen should not be in the secret. See, the two men are quitting the foot of the rocks."

This was true, and Robert Willoughby watched their movements with the glass. As had been expected, they first descended into the bed of the rivulet, wading along its shore, under the cover of the bushes, until they soon became concealed even from the view of one placed on a height as elevated as that occupied by Robert and Maud. It was sufficiently apparent, however, that their intention was to reach the forest in this manner, when they would probably commence their search for the missing young lady. Nor was it long before Robert and Maud plainly saw the two adventurers quit the bed of the stream and bury themselves in the forest. The question now seriously arose as to the best course for the major and his companion to pursue. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been wisest, perhaps, to descend at once and meet the messengers, who might soon be found at some of the usual haunts of the girl; but against this the latter so earnestly protested, and that in a manner so soothing to the young man's feelings, that he scarcely knew how to oppose her wishes. She implored him not to confide in Joel Strides too hastily, at least.

It might be time enough when there was no alternative; until the true character of the party then in the valley was known, it would be premature. Nothing was easier than to conceal himself until it was dark, when he might approach the Hut, and be admitted without his presence being known to any but those on whom the family could certainly rely. The major urged the impossibility of his quitting Maud until she was joined by the two men sent in quest of her, and then it would be too late, as he must be seen. Although he might escape immediate recognition in his present dress, the presence of a stranger would excite suspicions, and compel an explanation. To this Maud replied in the following manner: Her customary places of resort when in the woods were well known; more especially to Michael, who was frequently employed in their vicinity. These were—a little waterfall, that was situated a hundred rods up the rivulet, to which a path had been made expressly, and where an arbour, seat, and little table had been arranged, for the purposes of working, reading, or taking refreshments. To this spot the men would un-

questionably proceed first. Then, there was a deep ravine, some distance farther, which was often visited for its savage beauty, and whither she more frequently went, perhaps, than to any other place. Thither Michael would be certain to lead his companion. These two places visited, they might infallibly expect to see the men at the rock, where the two were then seated, as the last spot in which Maud might naturally be expected to be found. It would require an hour to visit the two places first named, and to examine the surrounding woods; and, by that time, not only would the sun be set, but the twilight would be disappearing. Until that moment, then, the major might remain at her side, and, on the sound of the approaching footsteps of the messengers, he had only to retire behind a projection of the rocks, and afterwards follow towards the Knoll at a safe distance.

This plan was too plausible to be rejected; and, giving Robert an hour of uninterrupted discourse with his companion, it struck him as having more advantages than any other mentioned. The party near the mills, too, remain-

ing perfectly quiet, there was less occasion for any change of their own than might otherwise have been the case. So far, indeed, from appearing to entertain any hostile intention, not a cabin had been injured, if approached; and the smoke of the conflagration, which had been expected to rise from the mills and the habitations in the glen, did not make its appearance. If any such ruthless acts as applying the brand and assaulting the people were in contemplation, they were at least delayed until night should veil them in a fitting darkness.

It is always a great relief to the mind, in moments of trial, to have decided on a course of future action. So the major and Maud now found; for, taking his seat by her side, he began to converse with his companion more connectedly, and with greater calmness than either had yet been able to achieve. Many questions were asked, and answers given, concerning the state of the family, that of his father and mother, and dear Beulah and her infant; the latter being as yet quite a stranger to the young soldier.

"Is he like his rebel of a father?" asked the royal officer, smiling, but, as his companion fancied, painfully; "or has he more of the look of the Willoughbys? Beekman is a good-looking Dutchman; yet I would rather have the boy resemble the good old English stock, after all."

"The sweet little fellow resembles both father and mother; though the first the most, to Beulah's great delight. Papa says he is true 'Holland's come of,' as they call it; though neither mamma nor I will allow of any such thing. Colonel Beekman is a very worthy man, Bob, and a most affectionate and attentive husband. Beulah, but for this war, could not be happier."

"Then I forgive him one-half of his treason; for the remainder, let him take his luck. Now I am an uncle, my heart begins to melt a little towards the rebel. And you, Maud, how do the honours of an aunt sit upon your feelings? But women are all heart, and would love a rat."

Maud smiled, but she answered not. Though

Beulah's child were almost as dear to her as one of her own could have been, she remembered that she was *not* its aunt in fact; and, though she knew not why, in that company, and even at that grave moment, the obtrusive thought summoned a bright flush to her cheeks. The major probably did not notice this change of countenance, since, after a short pause, he continued the conversation naturally.

"The child is called Evert, is it not, *aunt* Maud?" he asked, laying an emphasis on 'aunt.'

Maud wished this word had not been used; and yet Robert Willoughby, could the truth have been known, had adverted to it with an association in his own mind that would have distressed her, just then, still more. *Aunt* Maud was the name that others, however, were most fond of adopting, since the birth of the child; and, remembering this, our heroine smiled.

"That is what Beulah has called me these six months," she said, "or ever since Evert was born. I became an aunt the day he be-

came a nephew; and dear, good Beulah has not once called me *sister* since, I think."

"These little creatures introduce new ties into families," answered the major thoughtfully. "They take the places of the generations before them, and edge us out of our hold on the affections, as in the end they supplant us in our stations in life. If Beulah love me only as an *uncle*, however, she may look to it. I 'll be supplanted by no Dutchman's child that was ever born!"

"*You*, Bob!" cried Maud, starting. "You are its *real* uncle; Beulah must ever remember *you*, and *love* you, as her *own* brother!"

Maud's voice became suddenly hushed, like one who feared she had said too much. The major gazed at her intently, but he spoke not; nor did his companion see his look, her own eyes being cast meekly and tremblingly on the earth at her feet. A considerable pause succeeded, and then the conversation reverted to what was going on in the valley.

The sun was now set, and the shadows of evening began to render objects a little indistinct

beneath them. Still it was apparent that much anxiety prevailed in and about the Hut, doubtless on account of our heroine's absence. So great was it, indeed, as entirely to supersede the hanging of the remaining leaf of the gate, which stood in the gap to which it belonged, stayed by pieces of timber, but unhung. The major thought some disposition had been made, however, by which the inmates might pass and repass by the half that was suspended, making a tolerable defence when all was closed.

"Hist!" whispered Maud, whose faculties were quickened by the danger of her companion; "I hear the voice of Michael, and they approach. No sense of danger can repress poor O'Hearn's eloquence; his ideas seeming to flow from his tongue very much as they rise to his thoughts, chance directing which shall appear first."

"It is true, dear girl; and, as you seem so strongly to wish it, I will withdraw. Depend on my keeping near you, and on my presence, should it be required."

"You will not forget to come beneath the

windows, Bob," said Maud anxiously, but in great haste, for the footsteps of the men drew rapidly near, "at the very spot where the others descended."

The major bent forward, and kissed a cheek that was chilled with apprehension, but which the act caused to burn like fire; then he disappeared behind the projection of rock he had himself pointed out. As, for Maud, she sate in seeming composure, awaiting the approach of those who drew near.

"The divil bur-r-n me, and all the Injins in Ameriky along wid me," said Mike, scrambling up the ascent by a short cut, "but I think we'll find the young missus here, or I don't think we'll be finding her the night. It's a cursed counthry to live in, Misther Strides, where a young lady of the loveliness and pithiful beauty of Miss Maud can be lost in the woods, as it might be a sheep or a stray baste that was for tasting the neighbour's pastures."

"You speak too loud, Mike; and you speak foolishness into the bargain," returned the wary Joel.

"Is it I, you mane! Och! don't think ye're goin' to set me a rowin' a boat once more, ag'in my inclinations and edication, as ye did in ould times. I've rung ye into yer ma'tin', and out of yer ma'tin' too twenty times too often to be catched in that same trap twice. It 's Miss Maud I wants, and Miss Maud I'll find, or—Lord bless her swate face and morals, and her cha*rack*ter, and all belonging to her!—isn't that, now, a prathy composure for the likes of her, and the savages at the mill, and the missus in tears, and the masther mighty un'asy, and all of us bothered! See how she sits on that bit of a sate that I puts there for her wid my own hands, as a laddy should, looking jist what she is, the quane of the woods, and the delight of our eyes!"

Maud was too much accustomed to the rhapsodies of the County-Leitrim man to think much of this commencement; but, resolute to act her part with discretion, she rose to meet him, speaking with great apparent self-possession.

"Is it possible you are in quest of me?" she said; "why has this happened?—I usually return about this hour."

"Hoors is it! Don't talk of hoors, beauthiful young laddy, when a single quarther may be too late," answered Mike dogmatically. "It 's your own mother that's not happy at yer being in the woods the night, and yer ould father that has moore un'asiness than he 'll confess,—long life to the church in which confession is held to be right and dacent, and accorthing to the Gospel of St. Luke, and the whole calendar in the bargain! Ye 'll not be frightened, Miss Maud, but take what I've to tell ye jist as if ye didn't bel'ave a wo-r-r-d of it; but, divil bur-r-n me, if there arn't Injins enough on the rocks forenent the mill to scalp a whole province, and a county along wid it, if ye 'll give 'em time and knives enough!"

"I understand you, Michael, but am not in the least alarmed," answered Maud, with an air of great steadiness, such, indeed, as would have delighted the captain. "Something of what has been passing below have I seen; but, by being calm and reasonable, we shall escape the danger. Tell me only that all is safe in the Hut—that my dear mother and sister are well."

"Is it the missus? Och, she 's as valiant as a peacock, only strick down and overcome about your own self! As for Miss Beuly, where 's the likes of her to be found, unless it 's on this same bit of a rock? And it 's agraable to see the captain, looking for all the wor-r-ld like a commander-in-chaif of six or eight rijiments, ordering one this-a-way, and another that-a-way. By St. Patrick! young laddy, I only hopes them vagabonds will come on as soon as yourself is inside the sticks, jist to give the ould jontleman a better occasion to play souldier on 'em. Should they happen to climb over the sticks, I 've got the prattiest bit of a shillaleh ready that mortal eyes iver adorned! 'Twould break a head, and niver a hat harmed—a thousand's the pities them chaps wears no hats. Howsever, we 'll see."

"Thank you, Mike, for the courage you show, and the interest you take in all our welfares.—Is it not too soon to venture down upon the flats, Joel? I must trust to *you* as a guide."

"I think Miss Maud would do full as well if she did. Mike must be told, too, not to talk so

much, and above all, not to speak so loud. He may be heard sometimes a dozen rods."

"Tould!" exclaimed the County-Leitrim man in heat; "and isn't tould I've been twenty times already, by your own smooth conversation? Where 's the occasion to tell a thing over and over ag'in, when a man is not wanting in ears. It 's the likes of you that loves to convarse."

"Well, Mike, for my sake you will be silent, I hope," said Maud. "Remember, I am not fitted for a battle, and the first thing is to get safely into the house. The sooner we are down the hill, perhaps, the better it may be. Lead the way then, Joel, and I will follow. Michael will go next to you, in readiness for any enemy, and I will bring up the rear. It will be better for all to keep a dead silence, until it be necessary to speak."

This arrangement was made, and the party proceeded, Maud remaining a little behind, in order that the major might catch glimpses of her person, in the sombre light of the hour and the forest, and not miss the road. A few minutes brought them all upon the level land, where Joel,

instead of entering the open fields, inclined more into the woods, always keeping one of the many paths. His object was to cross the rivulet under cover, a suitable place offering at a short distance from the point where the stream glided out of the forest. Towards this spot Joel quietly held his way, occasionally stopping to listen if any movement of importance had occurred on the flats. As for Maud, her eyes were frequently cast behind her, for she was fearful Robert Willoughby might miss the path, having so little acquaintance with the thousand sinuosities he encountered. She caught glimpses of his person, however, in the distance, and saw that he was on the right track. Her chief concern, therefore, soon became an anxiety that he should not be seen by her companions. As they kept a little in advance, and the underbrush was somewhat thick, she had strong hopes that this evil would be avoided.

The path being very circuitous, it took some time to reach the spot Joel sought. Here he, Mike, and Maud crossed the rivulet on a tree that had been felled expressly to answer the purposes of a rustic foot-bridge, a common ex-

pedient of the American forest. As our heroine had often performed this exploit when alone, she required no assistance, and she felt as if half the danger of her critical situation had vanished when she found herself on the same side of the stream as the Hut. Joel, nothing suspecting, and keeping all his faculties on the sounds and sights that might occur in front, led the way diligently, and soon reached the verge of the woods. Here he paused for his companions to join him.

Twilight had by this time nearly disappeared. Still enough remained to enable Maud to perceive that many were watching for her, either at the windows above the cliff, or through different parts of the stockades. The distance was so small, that it might have been possible, by raising the voice, even to converse; but this would be an experiment too hazardous, as some hostile scouts at that hour might very well be fearfully near.

"I see nothing, Miss Maud," observed Joel, after taking a good look around him. "By keeping the path that follows the edge of the brook, though it is so crooked, we shall be certain of good walking, and shall be half hid by the

bushes. It 's best to walk quick, and to be silent."

Maud bade him go on, waiting herself behind a tree, to let the two men precede her a short distance. This was done, and the major stole up to her side unseen. A few words of explanation passed, when the young lady ran after her guides, leaving Robert Willoughby seated on a log. It was a breathless moment to Maud, that in which she was passing this bit of open land; but the distance was so short, that it was soon gotten over, and the three found themselves beneath the cliff. Here they passed the spring, and, following a path which led from it, turned the edge of the rocks, and ascended to the foot of the stockades. It remained to turn these also, in order to reach the so recently suspended gates. As Maud passed swiftly along, almost brushing the timbers with her dress, she saw, in the dim light, fifty faces looking at her, and thrust between the timbers; but, she paused not, spoke not, scarcely breathed. A profound stillness reigned on the Knoll; but, when Joel arrived at the gate, it was instantly opened, and he glided

in. Not so with Mike, who stopped and waited until she he had been in quest of entered before him, and was in safety.

Maud found herself in her mother's arms the instant the gate was passed. Mrs. Willoughby had been at the angle of the cliff, had followed her child in her swift progress round the stockade, and was ready to receive her the moment she entered. Beulah came next; and then the captain embraced, kissed, wept over, and scolded his little favourite.

"No reproaches now, Hugh," said the more considerate wife and gentlewoman; "Maud has done no more than has long been her custom, and no one could have foreseen what has happened."

"Mother—father," said Maud, almost gasping for breath, "let us bless God for my safety, and for the safety of all that are dear to us.—Thank you, dear Mr. Woods—there is a kiss, to thank you. Now let us go into the house; I have much to tell you. Come, dear sir—come, dearest mother, do not lose a moment; let us all go to the library."

As this was the room in which the family

devotions were usually held, the auditors fancied the excited girl wished to return her thanks in that mode, one not unfrequent in that regulated family; and all followed her who dared, with tender sympathy in her feelings, and profoundly grateful for her safety. As soon as she was in the room Maud carefully shut the door, and went from one to another, in order to ascertain who were present. Finding none but her father, mother, sister, and the chaplain, she instantly related all that had passed, and pointed out the spot where the major was at that moment waiting for the signal to approach. It is unnecessary to dwell on the astonishment and delight, mingled with concern, that this intelligence produced.

Maud then rapidly recounted her plan, and implored her father to see it executed. The captain had none of her apprehensions on the subject of his people's fidelity, but he yielded to the girl's earnest entreaties. Mrs. Willoughby was so agitated with all the unlooked-for events of the day, that she joined her daughter in the request, and Maud was told to proceed with the affair in her own way.

A lamp was brought, and placed by Maud in a pantry that was lighted by a single, long, narrow, external window at the angle of the building next the offices, and the door was close on it. This lamp was the signal for the major to approach, and with beating hearts the females bent forward from the windows, secure of not being seen in the night, which had now fairly closed on the valley, to listen to his approaching footsteps beneath. They did not wait long ere he was not only heard but dimly seen, though totally out of the line of sight from all in the Hut, with the exception of those above his head. Captain Willoughby had prepared a rope, one end of which was dropped, and fastened by the major himself around his body. A jerk let those above know when he was ready.

"What shall we do next?" asked the captain in a sort of despair. "Woods and I can never drag that tall, heavy fellow up such a distance. He is six feet, and weighs a hundred and eighty, if he weighs a pound."

"Peace," half-whispered Maud from a window. "All will be right in a moment." Then,

drawing in her body, the pale but earnest girl begged her father to have patience. "I have thought of all. Mike and the blacks may be trusted with our lives—I will call them."

This was done, and the County-Leitrim man and the two Plinies were soon in the room.

"O'Hearn," said Maud inquiringly, "I think you are my friend?"

"Am I my own! Is it yees, is the question? Well, jist wish for a tooth, and ye may take all in my head for the asking. Och, I 'd be a baste, else! I 'd ate the remainder of my days wid not'ing but a spoon to obleege ye."

"As for you, Pliny, and your son here, you have known us from children. Not a word must pass the lips of either as to what you see.—Now pull, but with great care, lest the rope break."

The men did as ordered, raising their load from the ground a foot or two at a time. In this manner the burthen approached, yard after yard, until it was evidently drawing near the window.

"It 's the captain hoisting up the big baste of a hog, for provisioning the hoose ag'in a saige,"

whispered Mike to the negroes, who grinned as they tugged; "and, when the cr'atur squails, see to it that ye do not squail yerselves."

At that moment the head and shoulders of a man appeared at the window. Mike let go the rope, seized a chair, and was about to knock the intruder on the head; but the captain arrested the blow.

"It 's one of the vagabond Injins that has undermined the hog, and coome up in its stead," roared Mike.

"It 's my son," answered the captain mildly; "see that you are silent and secret."

CHAPTER IV.

And glory long has made the sages smile ;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind.
Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle :
The present century was growing blind
To the great Marlborough's skill in giving knocks,
Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.

BYRON.

MAJOR WILLOUGHBY'S feet were scarcely on the library floor when he was clasped in his mother's arms. From these he soon passed into Beulah's; nor did his father hesitate about giving him an embrace nearly as warm. As for Maud, she stood by, weeping in sympathy and in silence.

"And you, too, old man," said Robert Willoughby, dashing the tears from his eyes, and

turning to the elder black, holding out a hand; "this is not the first time, by many, old Pliny, that you have had me between heaven and earth. Your son was my old playfellow, and we must shake hands also. As for O'Hearn, steel is not truer, and we are friends for life."

The negroes were delighted to see their young master; for, in that day, the slaves exulted in the honour, appearance, importance, and dignity of their owners, far more than their liberated descendants do now in their own. The major had been their friend when a boy, and he was at present their pride and glory. In their view of the matter, the English army did not contain his equal in looks, courage, military skill, or experience; and it was treason *per se* to fight against a cause that he upheld. The captain had laughingly related to his wife a conversation to this effect he had not long before overheard between the two Plinies.

"Well, Miss Beuly do a pretty well," observed the elder; "but, den he all 'e better if he no get 'Merican 'mission. What you call raal colonel, eh? Have 'e paper from 'e King like

Masser Bob, and wear a regimental like a head of a turkey-cock, so! Dat bein' an up and down officer."

"P'rhaps Miss Beuly bring a colonel round, and take off a blue coat, and put on a scarlet," answered the younger.

"Nebber!—nebber see dat, Plin, in a rebbleushun. Dis got to be a rebbleushun; and, when *dat* begin in 'arnest, gib up all idee of 'mendment. Rebbleushuns look all one way—nebber see two side, any more dan coloured man see two side in a red-skin."

As we have not been able to trace the thought to antiquity, this expression may have been the original of the celebrated axiom of Napoleon, which tells us that "revolutions never go backwards." At all events, such was the notion of Pliny Willoughby, Sen., as the namesake of the great Roman styled himself; and it was greatly admired by Pliny Willoughby, Jun., to say nothing of the opinions of Big Smash and Little Smash, both of whom were listeners to the discourse.

"Well, I wish a Colonel Beekman"—to

this name the fellow gave the true Doric sound of *Bake*man—"I wish a Colonel Beekman only corprul in King's troops, for Miss Beuly's sake. Better be sarjun dere, dan briggerdeer-ginral in 'Merikan company; dat *I* know."

"What a briggerdeer mean, Plin?" inquired Little Smash, with interest. "Who he keep company wid, and what he do? Tell a body, do—so many officer in 'e army, one nebber know all he name."

"'Mericans can't hab 'em. Too poor for *dat*. Briggerdeer great gentleum, and wear a red coat. Ole time, see 'em in hundreds, come to visit masser and missus, and play wid Masser Bob. Oh! no rebbleushun in dem days; but ebbery body know he own business, and *do* it too."

This will serve to show the political sentiments of the Plinies, and may also indicate the bias that the Smashes were likely to imbibe in such company. As a matter of course, the major was gladly welcomed by these devoted admirers; and, when Maud again whispered to them the necessity of secresy, each shut his mouth—no

trifling operation in itself—as if it were to be henceforth hermetically sealed.

The assistants were now dismissed, and the major was left alone with his family. Again and again Mrs. Willoughby embraced her son; nor had her new ties at all lessened Beulah's interest in her brother. Even the captain kissed his boy anew; while Mr. Woods shook hands once more with his old pupil, and blessed him. Maud alone was passive in this scene of feeling and joy.

"Now, Bob, let us to business," said the captain, as soon as tranquillity was a little restored. "You have not made this difficult and perilous journey without an object; and, as we are somewhat critically situated ourselves, the sooner we know what it is, the less will be the danger of its not producing its proper effect."

"Heaven send, dear sir, that it fail not in its effect, indeed!" answered the son. "But is not this movement in the valley pressing, and have I not come opportunely to take a part in the defence of the house?"

"That will be seen a few hours later, per-

haps. Everything is quiet now, and will probably so remain until near morning; or Indian tactics have undergone a change. The fellows have lighted camp-fires on their rocks, and seem disposed to rest for the present, at least. Nor do I know that they are bent on war at all. We have no Indians near us who would be likely to dig up the hatchet; and these fellows profess peace, by a messenger they have sent me."

"Are they not in their war-paint, sir? I remember to have seen warriors, when a boy, and my glass has given these men the appearance of being on what they call 'a war-path.'"

"Some of them are certainly in that guise, though he who came to the Knoll was not. *He* pretended that they were a party travelling towards the Hudson in order to learn the true causes of the difficulties between their Great English and their Great American Fathers. He asked for meal and meat to feed his young men with. This was the whole purport of his errand."

"And your answer, sir; is it peace or war between you?"

"Peace in professions, but I much fear war in reality. Still one cannot know. An old frontier garrison-man, like myself, is not apt to put much reliance on Indian faith. We are now, God be praised! all within the stockade; and, having plenty of arms and ammunition, are not likely to be easily stormed. A siege is out of the question; we are too well provisioned to dread that."

"But you leave the mills, the growing grain, the barns, even the cabins of your workmen, altogether at the mercy of these wretches."

"That cannot well be avoided, unless we go out and drive them off in open battle. For the last, they are too strong; to say nothing of the odds of risking fathers of families against mere vagabonds, as I suspect these savages to be. I have told them to help themselves to meal or grain, of which they will find plenty in the mill. Pork can be got in the houses; and they have made away with a deer already that I had expected the pleasure of dissecting myself. The cattle roam the woods at this season, and are tolerably safe; but they can

burn the barns and other buildings, should they see fit. In this respect we are at their mercy. If they ask for rum or cider, that may bring matters to a head; for refusing may exasperate them, and granting either, in any quantity, will certainly cause them all to get intoxicated."

"Why, would not that be good policy, Willoughby?" exclaimed the chaplain. "If fairly disguised once, our people might steal out upon them, and take away all their arms. Drunken men sleep very profoundly."

"It would be a canonical mode of warfare, perhaps, Woods," returned the captain, smiling, "but not exactly a military. I think it safer that they should continue sober; for, as yet, they manifest no great intentions of hostility. But of this we can speak hereafter. Why are you here, my son, and in this guise?"

"The motive may as well be told now as at another time," answered the major, giving his mother and sisters chairs, while the others imitated their example in being seated. "Sir William Howe has permitted me to come out to see you — I might almost say, *ordered* me

out; for matters have now reached a pass when we think every loyal gentleman in America must feel disposed to take sides with the crown."

A general movement among his auditors told the major the extent of the interest they felt in what was expected to follow. He paused an instant to survey the dark-looking group that was clustering around him, for no lights were in the room on account of the open windows; and he spoke in a low voice from motives of prudence: then he proceeded;

"I should infer, from the little that passed between Maud and myself," he said, "that you are ignorant of the two most important events that have yet occurred in this unhappy conflict."

"We learn little here," answered the father. "I have heard that my Lord Howe and his brother, Sir William, have been named commissioners by his Majesty to heal all the differences. I knew them both when young men, and their elder brother before them. Black Dick, as we used to call the admiral, is a discreet, well-meaning man; though I fear both of them owe their appointments more to their affinity

to the sovereign than to the qualities that might best fit them to deal with the Americans."

"Little is known of the affinity of which you speak,* and less said, in the army," returned the major; "but I fear there is no hope of the object of the commission being effected. The American congress has declared the colonies altogether independent of England; and, so far as this country is concerned, the war is carried on as between nation and nation. All allegiance, even in name, is openly cast aside."

"You astonish me, Bob! I did not think it could ever come to this!"

"I thought your native attachments would

* The mother of the three Lords Howe, so well known in American history,—viz. *George*, killed before Ticonderoga in the war of '56; *Richard*, the celebrated admiral, and the hero of the 1st of June; and Sir *William*, for several years commander-in-chief in America, and the 5th and last viscount,—was a Mademoiselle Kilmansegge, who was supposed to be a natural daughter of George I. This would make these three officers and George II. first-cousins, and George III. their great-nephew, *à la mode de Bretagne*. Walpole, and various other English writers, speak openly, not only of the connexion but of the family resemblance. Indeed, most of the gossiping writers of that age seem to allow that Lord Howe was a grandson of the first English sovereign of the House of Brunswick.

hardly endure as strong a measure as this has got to be," answered the major, not a little satisfied with the strength of feeling manifested by his father. "Yet has this been done, sir; and done in a way that it will not be easy to recall. Those who now resist us, resist for the sake of throwing off all connexion with England."

"Has France any agency in this, Bob? I own it startles me, and has a French look."

"It has driven many of the most respectable of our enemies into our arms, sir. We have never considered you a direct enemy, though unhappily inclining too much against us; 'But this will determine Sir Hugh,' said the commander-in-chief in our closing interview;—I suppose you know, my dear father, that all your old friends, knowing what has happened, insist on calling you Sir Hugh? I assure you I never open my lips on the subject; and yet Lord Howe drank to the health of Sir Hugh Willoughby, openly at his own table, the last time I had the honour to dine with him."

"Then, the next time he favours you with an invitation, Bob, be kind enough to thank

him. I want no empty baronetcy, nor do I ever think of returning to England to live. Were all I had on earth drummed together, it would barely make out a respectable competency for a private gentleman in that extravagant state of society; and what is a mere name to one in such circumstances? I wish it were transferable, my dear boy, in the old Scotch mode, and you should be Sir Bob before you slept."

"But, Willoughby, it may be useful to Robert; and why should he not have the title, since neither you nor I care for it?" asked the considerate mother.

"So he may, my dear; though he must wait for an event that I fancy you are not very impatient to witness — my death. When I am gone, let him be Sir Robert, and welcome. But, Bob, — for plain honest Bob must you remain till then, unless indeed you earn your spurs in this unhappy war,—have you any military tidings for us? We have heard nothing since the arrival of the fleet on the coast."

"We are in New York, after routing Washington on Long Island. The rebels" — the

major spoke a little more confidently than had been his wont — "the rebels have retreated into the high country, near the borders of Connecticut, where they have inveterate nests of the disaffected in their rear."

"And has all this been done without bloodshed? Washington had stuff in him in the old French business."

"*His* stuff is not doubted, sir; but his men make miserable work of it. Really I am sometimes ashamed of having been born in the country. These Yankees fight like wrangling women, rather than soldiers."

"How 's this!—You spoke honestly of the affair at Lexington, and wrote us a frank account of the murderous work at Bunker's Hill. Have their natures changed with the change of season?"

"To own the truth, sir, they did wonders on the Hill, and not badly in the other affair; but all their spirit seems gone. I am quite ashamed of them. Perhaps this declaration of independence, as it is called, has damped their ardour."

"No, my son, the change, if change there be,

depends on a general and natural law. Nothing but discipline and long training can carry men with credit through a campaign in the open field. Fathers and husbands, and brothers and lovers, make formidable enemies in sight of their own chimney-tops; but the most flogging regiments, we used to say, were the best fighting regiments for a long pull. But have a care, Bob; you are now of a rank that may well get you a separate command, and do not despise your enemy. I know these Yankees well; you are one yourself, though only half-blooded; but I know them well, and have often seen them tried. They are very apt to be badly commanded, Heaven cursing them for their sins in this form more than any other; but get them fairly at work, and the Guards will have as much as they can wish to get along with. Woods will swear to *that*."

"Objecting to the *mode* of corroboration, my dear sir, I can support its substance. Inclined as I am to uphold Cæsar, and to do honour to the Lord's anointed, I will not deny my countrymen's courage; though I think, Willoughby,

now I recall old times, it was rather the fashion of our officers to treat it somewhat disrespectfully."

"It was indeed," answered the captain thoughtfully; "and a silly thing it was. They mistook the nature of a mild and pacific people, totally without the glitter and habits of military life, for a timid people; and I have often heard the new hands in the colonies speak of their inhabitants with contempt on this very head. Braddock had that failing to a great degree; and yet this very Major Washington saved his army from annihilation, when it came to truly desperate work. Mark the words of a much older soldier than yourself, Bob: you may have more of the bravery of apparel, and present a more military aspect; may even gain advantages over them by means of higher discipline, better arms, and more accurate combinations; but, when you meet them fairly, depend on it you will meet dangerous foes, and men capable of being sooner drilled into good soldiers than any nation I have met with. Their great curse is, and probably will be, in selecting too many of their officers

from classes not embued with proper military pride, and altogether without the collaterals of a good military education."

To all this the major had nothing very material to object, and, remembering that the silent but thoughtful Beulah had a husband in what he called the rebel ranks, he changed the subject. Arrangements were now made for the comfort and privacy of the unlooked-for guest. Adjoining the library, a room with no direct communication with the court by means of either door or window, was a small and retired apartment containing a cot-bed, to which the captain was accustomed to retire in cases of indisposition, when Mrs. Willoughby wished to have either of her daughters with herself, on their account or on her own. This room was now given to the major, and in it he would be perfectly free from every sort of intrusion. He might eat in the library, if necessary; though all the windows of that wing of the house opening outward, there was little danger of being seen by any but the regular domestics of the family, all of whom were to be let into the secret of his presence, and all of

whom were rightly judged to be perfectly trustworthy.

As the evening promised to be dark, it was determined among the gentlemen that the major should disguise himself still more than he was already, and venture outside of the building, in company with his father and the chaplain, as soon as the people, who were now crowded into the vacant rooms in the empty part of the house, had taken possession of their respective quarters for the night. In the mean time a hearty supper was provided for the traveller in the library; the bullet-proof window-shutters of which room, and indeed of all the others on that side of the building, having first been closed, in order that lights might be used without drawing a shot from the adjoining forest.

"We are very safe here," observed the captain, as his son appeased his hunger with the keen relish of a traveller. "Even Woods might stand a siege in a house built and stockaded like this. Every window has solid bullet-proof shutters, with fastenings not easily broken; and the logs of the buildings might almost defy round-shot.

The gates are all up, one leaf excepted; and that leaf stands nearly in its place, well propped and supported. In the morning it shall be hung like the others. Then the stockade is complete, and has not a speck of decay about it yet. We shall keep a guard of twelve men up the whole night, with three sentinels outside of the buildings; and all of us will sleep in our clothes, and on our arms. My plan, should an assault be made, is to draw in the sentinels as soon as they have discharged their pieces, to close the gate, and man the loops. The last are all open, and spare arms are distributed at them. I had a walk made within the ridge of the roofs this spring, by which men can run round the whole Hut in the event of an attempt to set fire to the shingles, or fire over the ridge at an enemy at the stockades. It is a great improvement, Bob; and, as it is well railed, will make a capital station in a warm conflict before the enemy make their way within the stockade."

"We must endeavour not to let them get there, sir," answered the major. "But, as soon as your people are housed, I shall have an oppor-

tunity to reconnoitre. Open work is most to the taste of us regulars."

"Not against an Indian enemy. You will be glad of such a fortress as this, boy, before the question of independence, or no independence, shall be finally settled. Did not Washington entrench in the town?"

"Not much on that side of the water, sir; though he was reasonably well in the ground on Long Island. *There* he had many thousands of men, and works of some extent."

"And how did he get off the island?" demanded the captain, turning round to look his son in the face. "The arm of the sea is quite half-a-mile in width at that point; how did he cross it in the face of a victorious army?—or did he only save himself, while you captured his troops?"

The major coloured a little, and then he looked at Beulah and smiled good-naturedly.

"I am so surrounded by rebels here," he said, "that it is not easy to answer all your questions, sir. Beat him we did, beyond a question, and that with a heavy loss to his army; and out of

New York we have driven him, beyond a question: but—I will not increase Beulah's conceit by stating any more!"

"If you can tell me anything kind of Evert, Bob, you will act like a brother in so doing," said the gentle wife.

"Ay, Beekman did well too, they said. I heard some of our officers extolling a charge he made; and, to own the truth, I was not sorry to be able to say he was my sister's husband, since a fierce rebel she would marry. All our news of *him* is to his credit; — and now I shall get a kiss for my pains."

The major was not mistaken. With a swelling heart, but smiling countenance, his sister threw herself into his arms, when she kissed and was kissed until the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"It was of Washington I intended to speak, sir," resumed the major, dashing a tear or two from his own eyes as Beulah resumed her chair. "His retreat from the island is spoken of as masterly, and has gained him great credit. He conducted it in person, and did not lose a

man. I heard Sir William mention it as masterly."

"Then, by Heaven, America will prevail in this contest!" exclaimed the captain, striking his fist upon the table with a suddenness and force that caused all in the room to start. "If she has a general who can effect such a movement skilfully, the reign of England is over here. Why, Woods, Xenophon never did a better thing! The retreat of the ten thousand was boy's play to getting across that water. Besides, your victory could have been no great matter, Bob, or it would never have been done."

"Our victory was respectable, sir, while I acknowledge that the retreat was great. No one among us denies it, and Washington is always named with respect in the army."

In a minute more Big Smash came in, under the pretence of removing the dishes, but in reality to see Master Bob, and to be noticed by him. She was a woman of sixty, the mother of Little Smash, herself a respectable matron of forty; and both had been born in the household of Mrs. Willoughby's father, and had rather

more attachment for any one of her children than for all of their own, though each had been reasonably prolific. The *sobriquets* had passed into general use, and the real names of Bess and Mari' were nearly obsolete. Still, the major thought it polite to use the latter on the present occasion.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Bess," he said, shaking the old woman cordially by the hand, though he instinctively shrunk back from the sight of a pair of lips that were quite ultra in the way of pouting, which used often to salute him twenty years before, — "Upon my word, Mrs. Bess," you improve in beauty every time I see you. Old age and you seem to be total strangers to each other. How do you manage to remain so comely and so young?"

"God send 'e fus', Masser Bob, Heabben be praise! and a good conscience do 'e las'. I *do* wish you could make ole Plin hear *dat!* He nebber t'ink any good look, now-a-day, in a ole wench."

"Pliny is half blind. But that is the way with most husbands, Smash; they become blind

to the charms of their spouses after a few years of matrimony."

"Nebber get marry, Masser Bob, if dat be 'e way."

Then Great Smash gave such a laugh, and such a swing of her unwieldy body, that one might well have apprehended her downfall. But, no such thing. She maintained the equilibrium; for, renowned as she had been all her life at producing havoc among plates, and cups, and bowls, she was never known to be thrown off her own centre of gravity. Another hearty shake of the hand followed, and the major quitted the table. As was usual on all great and joyous occasions in the family, when the emotions reached the kitchen, that evening was remarkable for a "smash," in which half the crockery that had just been brought from the table fell an unresisting sacrifice. This produced a hot discussion between "the Big" and "the Little" as to the offender, which resulted, as so often happens in these inquiries into the accidents of domestic life, in the conclusion that "nobody" was to blame.

"How 'e t'ink he *can* come back, and not a

plate crack!" exclaimed little Smash in a vindicatory tone, she being the real delinquent. "Get in 'e winder, too! Lor'! *dat* enough to break all 'e dish in 'e house, and in 'e mill, too! I *do* wish ebbery plate we got was an Injin—den you see fun! Can nebber like Injin; 'em so red, and so sabbage!"

"Nebber talk of Injin now," answered the indignant mother; "better talk of plate. Dis make forty t'ousand dish you break, Mari', sin' you war' a young woman. S'pose you t'ink Masser made of plate, dat you break 'em up so! Dat what ole Plin say—de nigger! He say all men made of clay, and plate made of clay, too—well, bot' clay and bot' *break*. All on us wessels, and all on us break to pieces some day, and den dey'll t'row *us* away, too."

A general laugh succeeded this touch of morality, Great Smash being a little addicted to ethical remarks of this nature; after which the war was renewed on the subject of the broken crockery. Nor did it soon cease; wrangling, laughing, singing, toiling, a light-heartedness that knew no serious cares, and affection, making up

the sum of the every-day existence of these semi-civilized beings. The presence of the party in the valley, however, afforded the subject of an episode; for a negro has quite as much of the *de haut en bas* in his manner of viewing the aborigines, as the whites have in their speculations on his own race. Mingled with this contempt, notwithstanding, was a very active dread; neither of the Plinies, nor of their amiable consorts, in the least relishing the idea of being shorn of the wool with shears as penetrating as the scalping-knife. After a good deal of discussion on this subject, the kitchen arrived at the conclusion that the visit of the major was ordered by Providence, since it was out of all the rules of probability and practice to have a few half-clad savages get the better of "Masser Bob," who was born a soldier, and had so recently been fighting for the king.

On the latter subject, we ought to have stated that the captain's kitchen was ultra-loyal. The rude but simple beings it contained had a reverence for rank and power that even a "rebbelushun" could not disturb,

and which closely associated, in their minds, royal authority with divine power. Next to their own master, they considered George III. as the greatest man of the age; and there was no disposition in them to rob him of his rights or his honours.

"You seem thoughtful, Woods," said the captain, while his son had retired to his own room, in order to assume a disguise less likely to attract attention in the garrison than a hunting-shirt. "Is it this unexpected visit of Bob's that furnishes food for reflection!"

"Not so much his visit, my dear Willoughby, as the news he brings us. God knows what will befall the church, should this rebellion make serious head. The country is in a dreadful way already on the subject of religion; but it will be far worse if these 'canters' get the upper hand of the government."

The captain was silent and thoughtful for a moment; then he laughingly replied,

"Fear nothing for the church, chaplain. It is of God, and will outlast a hundred political revolutions."

"I don't know that, Willoughby; I don't know that."—The chaplain did not exactly mean what he said.—"'Twouldn't surprise me if we had '*taking* up collections,' '*sitting under preaching*,' '*providentially happening*,' '*exercised in mind*,' and '*our Zion*,' finding their way into dictionaries."

"Quite likely, Woods," returned the captain, smiling. "Liberty is known to produce great changes in *things*; why not in language?"

"Liberty, indeed! Yes; '*liberty* in prayer' is another of their phrases. Well, Captain Willoughby, if this rebellion should succeed, we may give up all hopes for the church. What sort of government shall we have, do you imagine, sir?"

"Republican, of course," answered the captain, again becoming thoughtful as his mind reverted to the important results that were really dependent on the present state of things; "Republican: it *can* be no other. These colonies have always had a strong bias in that direction, and they want the elements necessary to a monarchy. New York has a landed

gentry, it is true; and so has Maryland, and Virginia, and the Carolinas: but they are not strong enough to set up a political aristocracy, or to prop a throne; and then this gentry will probably be much weakened by the struggle. Half the principal families are known to be with the crown, as it is; and new men will force them out of place in a revolution. No, Woods; if this revolution prosper, the monarchy is done in America, for at least a century."

"And the prayers for the king and royal family—what will become of *them?*"

"I should think they must cease also. I question if a people will continue long to pray for authorities that they refuse to obey."

"I shall stick to the rubrics as long as I have a tongue in my head. I trust, Willoughby, *you* will not stop these prayers in your settlement?"

"It is the last mode in which I should choose to show hostility. Still, you must allow, it is a little too much to ask a congregation to pray that the king shall overcome his enemies, when they are among those very enemies? The question presents a dilemma."

"And, yet, I have never failed to read that prayer, as well as all the rest. You have not objected hitherto."

"I have not, for I have considered the war as being waged with parliament and the ministers, whereas it is now clearly with the king. This paper is certainly a plain and forcible document."

"And what is that paper? Not the Westminster Confession of Faith, or the Saybrook Platform, I hope; one of which will certainly supersede the Thirty-nine Articles in all our churches, if this rebellion prosper."

"It is the manifesto issued by Congress to justify their declaration of independence. Bob has brought it with him, as a proof how far matters have been carried; but, really, it seems to be a creditable document, and is eloquently reasoned."

"I see how it is, Willoughby; I see how it is. We shall find you a rebel general yet; and I expect to live to hear *you* talk about 'our Zion' and 'providential accidents.'"

"Neither, Woods. For the first I am too

old; and for the last I have too much taste, I trust. Whether I shall always pray for the king, is another matter. But, here is the major, ready for his sortie. Upon my word, his masquerade is so complete, I hardly know him myself."

CHAPTER V.

He could not rest, he could not stay
Within his tent to wait for day;
But walked him forth along the sand,
Where thousand sleepers strewed the strand.
Siege of Corinth.

It was now so late that most of the men of the Hut, and all the women and children, were housed for the night, provided no alarm occurred. There was consequently little risk in the major's venturing forth, disguised as he was, should care be taken not to approach a light. The great number of the latter, streaming through the windows of the western wing of the building, showed how many were now collected within the walls, and gave an unusual appearance of life and animation to the place. Still, the court was clear: the men seeking

their pallets, in readiness for their coming watches; while the women were occupied with those great concerns of female life, the care of children.

The captain, major, and chaplain, each carrying a rifle, and the two former pistols, moved rapidly across the court, and passed the gate. The moveable leaf of the latter was left unbarred, it being the orders of the captain to the sentinels without, on the approach of an enemy, to retire within the court, and then to secure the fastenings.

The night was starlight, and it was cool, as is common to this region of country. There being neither lamp nor candle on the exterior of the house, even the loops being darkened, there was little danger in moving about within the stockades. The sentinels were directed to take their posts so near the palisades as to command views of the open lawn without, a precaution that would effectually prevent the usual stealthy approach of an enemy without discovery. As the alarm had been very decided, these irregular guardians of the house

were all at their posts, and exceedingly watchful; a circumstance that enabled the captain to avoid them, and thus further remove the danger of his son's being recognised. He accordingly held himself aloof from the men, keeping within the shadows of the sides of the Hut.

As a matter of course, the first object to which our two soldiers directed their eyes was the rock above the mill. The Indians had lighted fires, and were now apparently bivouacked at no great distance from them, having brought boards from below with that especial object. Why they chose to remain in this precise position, and why they neglected the better accommodations afforded by some fifteen or twenty log-cabins, that skirted the western side of the valley in particular, were subjects of conjecture. That they were near the fires the board shantees proved, and that they were to the last degree careless of the proximity of the people of the place would seem also to be apparent in the fact that they had not posted, so far as could be ascertained, even a solitary sentinel.

"This is altogether surprising for Indian tactics," observed the captain in a low voice; for everything that was uttered that night without the building was said in very guarded tones. "I have never before known the savages to cover themselves in that manner; nor is it usual with them to light fires to point out the positions they occupy, as these fellows seem to have done."

"Is it not all *seeming*, sir?" returned the major. "To me that camp, if camp it can be called, has an air of being deserted."

"There is a look about it of premeditated preparation that one ought always to distrust in war."

"Is it not unmilitary, sir, for two soldiers like ourselves to remain in doubt on such a point? My professional pride revolts at such a state of things; and, with your leave, I will go outside, and set the matter at rest by reconnoitring."

"Professional pride is a good thing, Bob, rightly understood, and rightly practised. But the highest point of honour with the really good soldier is to do that for which he was precisely intended. Some men fancy armies were got to-

gether just to maintain certain exaggerated notions of military honour; whereas military honour is nothing but a moral expedient to aid in effecting the objects for which they are really raised. I have known men so blinded as to assert that a soldier is bound to maintain his honour at the expense of the law; and this in face of the fact that, in a free country, a soldier is in truth nothing but one of the props of the law in the last resort. So with us: we are here to defend this house, and those it contains; and our military honour is far more concerned in doing that effectually, and by right means, than in running the risk of not doing it at all, in order to satisfy an abstract and untenable notion of a false code. Let us do what is *right*, my son, and feel no concern that our honour suffer."

Captain Willoughby said this, because he fancied it a fault in his son's character, sometimes to confound the end with the means in appreciating the ethics of his profession. This is not an uncommon error among those who bear arms, instances not being wanting in which bodies of men, that are the mere creatures of authority,

have not hesitated to trample the power that brought them into existence under foot, rather than submit to mortify the feelings of a purely conventional and exaggerated pride. The major was rebuked rather than convinced, it not being the natural vocation of youth to perceive the justice of all the admonitions of age.

"But, if one can be made auxiliary to the other, sir," the son remarked, "then you will allow that professional *esprit* and professional prudence may very well march hand in hand?"

"Of that there can be no doubt; though I think it far wiser, and more soldier-like even, to use all proper precautions to guard this house, under our actual circumstances, than to risk anything material in order to satisfy our doubts concerning the state of that camp."

"But the cabins, and all the property that lies exposed to fire and other accidents, including the mills,—is it not worth your while to let me make a little excursion, in order to ascertain the state of things as connected with them?"

"Perhaps it would, Bob," returned the father, after a little reflection. "It would be

a great point gained, to send a man to look after the buildings, and the horses. The poor beasts may be suffering for water; and, as you say, the first thing will be to ascertain where our wild visitors really are, and what they are actually bent on. Woods, go with us to the gate, and let us out. I rely on your saying nothing of our absence, except to explain to the two nearest sentinels who we are, and to be on the look-out for us against the moment we may return."

"Will it not be very hazardous to be moving in front of the stockade in the dark? Some of our own people may fire upon you."

"You will tell them to be cautious, and we shall use great circumspection in our turn. I had better give you a signal by which we shall be known."

This was done, and the party moved from under the shadows of the Hut down to the gate. Here the two soldiers halted for several minutes, taking a deliberate and as thorough a survey of the scene without as the darkness permitted. Then the chaplain opened the gate, and they issued forth, moving with great cau-

tion down the lawn towards the flats. As a matter of course, Captain Willoughby was perfectly familiar with all the lanes, ditches, bridges, and fields of his beautiful possessions. The alluvial soil that lay spread around him was principally the result of ages of deposit while the place was covered with water; but, as the overflowing of the water had been produced by a regular 'dam, the latter once removed, the meadows were free from the excessive moisture which generally saturates drained lands. Still, there were two or three large open ditches, to collect the water that came down the adjacent mountains, or bubbled up from springs near the margin of the woods. Across these ditches the roads led, by bridges; and the whole valley was laid out, in this manner, equally with a view to convenience and rural beauty. A knowledge of all the windings was of great use, on the present occasion, even on the advance; while, on the retreat, it might clearly be the means of preserving the lives or liberties of the two adventurers.

The captain did not proceed by the prin-

cipal road which led from the Hut to the mills, the great thoroughfare of the valley, since it might be watched, in order to prevent a hostile sortie against the camp ; but he inclined to the right, or to the westward, in order to visit the cabins and barns in that quarter. It struck him his invaders might have quietly taken possession of the houses, or even have stolen his horses and decamped. In this direction, then, he and his son proceeded, using the greatest caution in their movements, and occasionally stopping to examine the waning fires at the rock, or to throw a glance behind them at the stockade. Everything remained in the quiet which renders a forest settlement so solemn and imposing after the daily movements of man have ceased. The deepest and most breathless attention could not catch an unaccustomed sound. Even the bark of a dog was not heard, all those useful animals having followed their masters into the Hut, as if conscious that their principal care now lay in that direction. Each of the sentinels had one of these animals near him, crouched under the stockade, in the expectation of their

giving the alarm, should any strange footstep approach. In this manner most of the distance between the Knoll and the forest was crossed, when the major suddenly laid a hand on his father's arm.

"Here is something stirring on our left," whispered the former. "It seems, too, to be crouching under the fence."

"You have lost your familiarity with our rural life, Bob," answered the father, with a little more confidence of tone, but still guardedly, "or this fragrant breath would tell you we are almost on a cow. It is old Whiteback; I know her by her horns. Feel, she is here in the lane with us, and within reach of your hand. A gentler animal is not in the settlement. But stop: pass your hand on her udder, she will not stir; how is it, full or not?"

"If I can judge, sir, it is nothing remarkable in the way of size."

"I understand this better. By Jupiter, boy, that cow has been milked! It is certain none of our people have left the house to do it since

the alarm was first given. This is ominous of neighbours."

The major made no reply, but he felt to ascertain if his arms were in a state for immediate service. After a moment's further pause the captain proceeded, moving with increased caution. Not a word was now uttered, for they were getting within the shadows of the orchard, and indeed of the forest, where objects could not well be distinguished at the distance of a very few yards. A cabin was soon reached, and it was found empty ; the fire reduced to a few embers, and quite safe. This was the residence of the man who had the care of the horses, the stables standing directly behind it. Captain Willoughby was a thoughtful and humane man, and it struck him the animals might now be turned into a field that joined the barn-yard, where there was not only rich pasture, but plenty of sweet running water. This he determined to do at once, the only danger being from the unbridled movements of cattle that must be impatient from unusual privation and a prolonged restraint.

The major opened the gate of the field, and stationed himself in a way to turn the animals in the desired direction, while his father went into the stable to set them free. The first horse came out with great deliberation, being an old animal well cooled with toil at the plough; and the major had merely to swing his arm to turn him into the field. Not so with the next, however. This was little better than a colt, a creature in training for his master's saddle; and no sooner was it released than it plunged into the yard, then bounded into the field, around which it galloped until it found the water. The others imitated this bad example; the clatter of hoofs, though beaten on a rich turf, soon resounding in the stillness of the night, until it might be heard across the valley. The captain then rejoined his son.

"This is a good deed somewhat clumsily done, Bob," observed the father, as he picked up his rifle and prepared to proceed. "An Indian ear, however, will not fail to distinguish between the tramping of horses and a charge of foot."

"Faith, sir, the noise may serve us a good turn yet. Let us take another look at the fires, and see if this tramping has set any one in motion near them. We can get a glimpse a little further ahead."

The look was taken, but nothing was seen. While standing perfectly motionless beneath the shadows of an apple-tree, however, a sound was heard, quite near them, which resembled that of a guarded footstep. Both gentlemen drew up, like sportsmen expecting the birds to rise, in waiting for the sound to approach. It did draw nearer; and presently a human form was seen moving slowly forward in the path, approaching the tree as if to get within its cover. It was allowed to draw nearer and nearer, until Captain Willoughby laid his hand, from behind the trunk, on the stranger's shoulder, demanding sternly, but in a low voice, "Who are you?"

The start, the exclamation, and the tremor that succeeded, all denoted the extent of this man's surprise. It was some little time, even, before he could recover from his alarm; and then he let himself be known by his answer.

"Massy!" exclaimed Joel Strides, who ordinarily gave this Doric sound to the word "mercy" — "massy, captain, is it *you!* I should as soon thought of seeing a ghost! What in natur' has brought you out of the stockade, sir?"

"I think that is a question I might better ask you, Mr. Strides. My orders were to keep the gate close, and for no one to quit the court-yard, even, until sent on post, or called by an alarm."

"True, sir—quite true—true as Gospel. But let us moderate a little, captain, and speak lower; for the Lord only knows who 's in our neighbourhood. Who 's that with you, sir? Not the Rev. Mr. Woods, is it?"

"No matter who is with me. *He* has the authority of my commands for being here, whoever he may be, while you are here in opposition to them. You know me well enough, Joel, to understand nothing but the simple truth will satisfy me."

"Lord, sir, I am one of them that never wish to tell you anything *but* truth. The cap-

tain has known me now long enough to understand my natur', I should think; so, no more need be said about *that*."

"Well, sir, give me the reason; and see that it is given to me without reserve."

"Yes, sir; the captain shall have it. He knows we scrambled out of our houses this afternoon a little onthinkingly, Injin alarms being skeary matters. It was an awful hurrying time! Well, the captain understands, too, we don't work for him without receiving our wages; and I have been laying up a little every year, until I 've scraped together a few hundred dollars, in good half-joes; and I bethought me the money might be in danger should the savages begin to plunder; and I 've just came out to look a'ter the money."

"If this be true, as I hope and can easily believe to be the case, you must have the money about you, Joel, to prove it."

The man stretched forth his arm, and let the captain feel a handkerchief, in which, sure enough, there was a goodly quantity of coin. This gave him credit for truth, and removed all suspicion of

his present excursion being made with any sinister intention. The man was questioned as to his mode of passing the stockade, when he confessed he had fairly clambered over it, an exploit of no great difficulty from the inside. As the captain had known Joel too long to be ignorant of his love of money, and the offence was very pardonable in itself, he readily forgave the breach of orders. This was the only man in the valley who did not trust his little hoard in the iron chest at the Hut,—even the miller reposing that much confidence in the proprietor of the estate; but Joel was too conscious of dishonest intentions himself to put any unnecessary faith in others.

All this time the major kept so far aloof as not to be recognised, though Joel once or twice betrayed symptoms of a desire to ascertain who he was. Maud had awakened suspicions that now became active in both father and son, when circumstances so unexpectedly and inconveniently threw the man in their way. It was consequently the wish of the former to get rid of his overseer as soon as possible. Previously to doing this, however, he saw fit to interrogate him a little further.

"Have you seen anything of the Indians since you left the stockade, Strides?" demanded the captain. "We can perceive no other traces of their presence than yonder fires, though we think that some of them must have passed this way, for Whiteback's udder is empty."

"To own the truth, captain, I haven't. I some think that they've left the valley; though the Lord only can tell when they'll be back ag'in. Such critturs be beyond calcilation! They outdo arithmetic, nohow. As for the cow, I milked her myself; for being the crittur the captain has given to Phœbe for her little dairy, I thought it might hurt her not to be attended to. The pail stands yonder, under the fence; and the women and children in the Hut may be glad enough to see it in the morning."

This was very characteristic of Joel Strides. He did not hesitate about disobeying orders, or even to risk his life, in order to secure his money; but, determined to come out, he had the forethought and care to bring a pail, in order to supply the wants of those who were now crowded within the stockade, and who were too much

accustomed to this particular sort of food not to suffer from its absence. If we add, that, in the midst of all this prudent attention to the wants of his companions, Joel had an eye to his personal popularity and what are called "ulterior events," and that he selected his own cow for the precise reason given, the reader has certain distinctive traits of the man before him.

"This being the case," returned the captain, a good deal relieved at finding that the savages had not been the agents in this milking affair, since it left the probability of their remaining stationary,—"This being the case, Joel, you had better find the pail, and go in. As soon as day dawns, however, I recommend that all the cows be called up to the stockade and milked generally. They are feeding in the lanes just now, and will come readily, if properly invited. Go, then; but say nothing of having met me and—"

"Who else did the captain say?" inquired Joel curiously, observing that the other paused.

"Say nothing of having met us at all, I tell you. It is very important that my movements should be secret."

The two gentlemen now moved on, intending to pass in front of the cabins, which lined this part of the valley, by a lane which would bring them out at the general highway which led from the Knoll to the mill. The captain marched in front, while his son brought up the rear, at a distance of two or three paces. Each walked slowly and with caution, carrying his rifle in the hollow of his arm, in perfect readiness for service. In this manner both had proceeded a few yards, when Robert Willoughby felt his elbow touched, and saw Joel's face within eighteen inches of his own, as the fellow peered under his hat. It was an action so sudden and unexpected, that the major saw at once nothing but perfect coolness could avert his discovery.

"Is 't you, Dan'l?"—so was the miller named. "What in natur' has brought the old man on this tramp, with the valley filled with Injins?" whispered Joel, prolonging the speech in order to get a better view of a face and form that still baffled his conjectures. "Let 's know all about it."

"You 'll get me into trouble," answered the

major, shaking off his unwelcome neighbour, moving a step further from him, and speaking also in a whisper. "The captain 's bent on a scout, and you know he 'll not bear contradiction. Off with you, then, and don't forget the milk."

As the major moved away, and seemed determined to baffle him, Joel had no choice between complying and exposing his disobedience of orders to the captain. He disliked doing the last, for his cue was to seem respectful and attached, and he was fain to submit. Never before, however, did Joel Strides suffer a man to slip through his fingers with so much reluctance. He saw that the captain's companion was not the miller, while the disguise was too complete to enable him to distinguish the person or face. In that day, the different classes of society were strongly distinguished from each other by their ordinary attire; and, accustomed to see Major Willoughby only in the dress that belonged to his station, he would not be likely to recognise him in his present guise, had he even known of or suspected his visit. As it was, he was completely at fault;

satisfied it was not his friend Daniel, while unable to say who it was.

In this doubting state of mind, Joel actually forgot the savages, and the risks he might run from their proximity. He walked, as it might be mechanically, to the place where he had left the pail, and then proceeded slowly towards the Knoll, pondering at every step on what he had just seen. He and the miller had secret communications with certain active agents of the revolutionists, that put them in possession of facts, notwithstanding their isolated position, with which even their employer was totally unacquainted. It is true, these agents were of that low caste that never fail to attach themselves to all great political enterprises, with a sole view to their own benefit; still, as they were active, cunning, and bold, and had the sagacity to make themselves useful, they passed in the throng of patriots created by the times, and were enabled to impart to men of similar spirits much available information.

It was through means like these that Joel

knew of the all-important measure of the declaration of independence, while it still remained a secret to Captain Willoughby. The hope of confiscations was now active in the bosoms of all this set, and many of them had even selected the portions of property that they intended should be the reward of their own love of freedom and patriotism. It has been said that the English ministry precipitated the American revolution, with a view to share among their favourites the estates that it was thought it would bring within the gift of the Crown; a motive so heinous as almost to defy credulity, and which may certainly admit of rational doubts. On the other hand, however, it is certain that individuals, who will go down to posterity in company with the many justly illustrious names that the events of 1776 have committed to history, were actuated by the most selfish inducements, and, in divers instances, enriched themselves with the wrecks of estates that formerly belonged to their kinsmen or friends. Joel Strides was of too low a class to get his name enrolled very high on the list of heroes, nor was he at all ambitious of any

such distinction; but he was not so low that he could not and did not aspire to become the owner of the property of the Hutted Knoll. In an ordinary state of society, so high a flight would seem irrational in so low an aspirant; but Joel came of a people who seldom measure their pretensions by their merits, and who imagine that to boldly aspire, more especially in the way of money, is the first great step to success. The much talked-of and little understood doctrine of political equality has this error to answer for in thousands of cases; for nothing can be more hopeless, in the nature of things, than to convince a man of the necessity of possessing qualities of whose existence he has not even a faint perception, ere he may justly pretend to be put on a level with the high-minded, the just, the educated, and the good. Joel, therefore, saw no other reason than the law against his becoming the great landlord, as well as Captain Willoughby; and, could the law be so moulded as to answer his purposes, he had discreetly resolved to care for no other considerations. The thought of the consequences to Mrs. Willoughby and

her daughters gave him no concern whatever; they had already possessed the advantages of their situation so long, as to give Phœbe and the miller's wife a sort of moral claim to succeed them. In a word, Joel, in his yearnings after wealth, had only faintly shadowed forth the modern favourite doctrine of "rotation in office."

The appearance of a stranger in company with Captain Willoughby could not fail, therefore, to give rise to many conjectures in the mind of a man whose daily and hourly thoughts were running on these important changes. "Who *can* it be?" thought Joel, as he crawled along the lane, bearing the milk, and lifting one leg after the other as if lead were fastened to his feet. "Dan'el it is not;—nor is it any one that I can consait on, about the Hut. The captain is mightily strengthened by this marriage of his da'ter with Colonel Beekman, that 's sartain. The colonel stands wonderful well with our folks, and he'll not let all this first-rate land, with such capital betterments, go out of the family without an iffort, I conclude. But then I calcilate on

his being killed—there must be a disperate lot on 'em shot afore the war's over, and *he* is as likely to be among 'em as another. Dan'el thinks the colonel has the look of a short-lived man. Waal, to-morrow will bring about a knowledge of the name of the captain's companion, and then a body may calcilate with greater sartainty."

This is but an outline of what passed through Joel's mind as he moved onward. It will serve, however, to let the reader into the secret of his thoughts, as well as into their ordinary train, and is essentially connected with some of the succeeding events of our legend. As the overseer approached the stockade, his ideas were so abstracted that he forgot the risk he ran; but, walking carelessly towards the palisades, the dogs barked, and then he was saluted by a shot. This effectually aroused Joel, who called out in his natural voice, and probably saved his life by so doing. The report of the rifle, however, produced an alarm; and, by the time the astounded overseer had staggered up to the gate, the men were pouring out from the court, armed, and expecting an assault. In the midst of this scene of confusion the chap-

lain admitted Joel, as much astonished as the man himself at the whole of the unexpected occurrence.

It is unnecessary to say that many questions were asked. Joel got rid of them by simply stating that he had gone out to milk a cow, by the captain's private orders, and that he had forgotten to arrange any signal by which his return might be known.' He ventured to name his employer, because he knew he was not there to contradict him; and Mr. Woods, being anxious to ascertain if his two friends had been seen, sent the men [illegible] to their lairs without delay, detaining the overseer at the gate for a minute's private discourse. As the miller obeyed with the rest, he looked for the pail with an eye to his own children's comfort; but, on receiving it, he found it empty! The bullet had passed through it, and the contents had escaped.

"Did you see any *thing*, or *person*, Strides?" demanded the chaplain as soon as the two were alone.

"Lord, Mr. Woods, I met the captain!—The sight on him came over me a'most as cruelly

as the shot from the rifle; for I no more expected it than I do to see you rise up to heaven in your clothes, like Elijah of old. Sure enough, *there* was the captain himself, and—and——"

Here Joel sneezed, repeating the word "and" several times, in hopes the chaplain would supply the name he so much wished to hear.

"But you saw no savages?—I know the captain is out; and you will be careful not to mention it, lest it get to Mrs. Willoughby's ears, and make her uneasy.—You saw nothing of the savages?"

"Not a bit: the critturs lie cluss enough, if they haven't actually tramped. *Who* did you say was with the captain, Mr. Woods?"

"I said nothing about it: I merely asked after the Indians, who, as you say, do keep themselves very close. Well, Joel, go to your wife, who must be getting anxious about you, and be prudent."

Thus dismissed, the overseer did not dare to hesitate; but he entered the court, still pondering on the late meeting.

As for the two adventurers, they pursued their

march in silence. As a matter of course, they heard the report of the rifle, and caught some faint sounds from the alarm that succeeded: but, readily comprehending the cause, they produced no uneasiness; the stillness which succeeded soon satisfying them that all was right. By this time they were within a hundred yards of the flickering fires. The major had kept a strict watch on the shantees at the report of the rifle, but not a living thing was seen moving in their vicinity. This induced him to think the place deserted, and he whispered as much to his father.

"With any other enemy than an Indian," answered the latter, "you might be right enough, Bob; but with these rascals one is never certain. We must advance with a good deal of their own caution."

This was done; and the gentlemen approached the fires in the most guarded manner, keeping the shantees between them and the light. By this time, however, the flames were nearly out, and there was no great difficulty in looking into the nearest shantee without much exposure. It

was deserted, as proved to be the case with all the others on further examination. Major Willoughby now moved about on the rock with greater confidence; for, naturally brave and accustomed to use his faculties with self-command in moments of trial, he drew the just distinctions between real danger and unnecessary alarm,—the truest of all tests of courage.

The captain, feeling a husband's and a father's responsibility, was a little more guarded; but success soon gave him more confidence, and the spot was thoroughly explored. The two then descended to the mills, which, together with the adjacent cabins, they entered also, and found uninjured and empty. After this, several other suspected points were looked at, until the captain came to the conclusion that the party had retired for the night at least, if not entirely. Making a circuit, however, he and his son visited the chapel, and one or two dwellings on that side of the valley, when they bent their steps towards the Knoll.

As the gentlemen approached the stockade, the captain gave a loud hem, and clapped his

hands. At the signal the gate flew open, and they found themselves in company with their friend the chaplain once more. A few words of explanation told all they had to say, and then the three passed into the court, and separated; each taking the direction towards his own room. The major, fatigued with the toils of a long march, was soon in a soldier's sleep; but it was hours before his more thoughtful and still uneasy father could obtain the rest which nature so much requires.

CHAPTER VI.

I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;
So will I never be; so may you miss me;
But, if you do, you 'll make me wish a sin
That I had been forsworn.

Portia.

CAPTAIN WILLOUGHBY knew that the hour which preceded the return of light was that in which the soldier had the most to apprehend when in the field. This is the moment when it is usual to attempt surprises; and it was, in particular, the Indian's hour of blood. Orders had been left, accordingly, to call him at four o'clock, and to see that all the men of the Hut were afoot, and armed also. Notwithstanding the deserted appearance of the valley, this experienced frontier warrior distrusted the signs of the times; and he looked forward to the pro-

bability of an assault, a little before the return of day, with a degree of concern he would have been sorry to communicate to his wife and daughters.

Every emergency had been foreseen, and such a disposition made of the forces as enabled the major to be useful, in the event of an attack, without exposing himself unnecessarily to the danger of being discovered. He was to have charge of the defence of the rear of the Hut, or that part of the buildings where the windows opened outwards; and Michael and the two Plinics were assigned him as assistants. Nor was the ward altogether a useless one. Though the cliff afforded a material safeguard to this portion of the defences, it might be scaled; and, it will be remembered, there was no stockade at all on this the northern end of the house.

When the men assembled in the court, therefore, about an hour before the dawn, Robert Willoughby collected his small force in the dining-room, the outer apartment of the *suite*, where he examined their arms by lamp-light, inspected their accoutrements, and directed them

to remain until he issued fresh orders. His father, aided by Serjeant Joyce, did the same in the court; issuing out, through the gate of the buildings, with his whole force as soon as this duty was performed. The call being general, the women and children were all up also; many of the former repairing to the loops, while the least resolute or the less experienced of their number administered to the wants of the young, or busied themselves with the concerns of the household. In a word, the Hut, at that early hour, resembled a hive in activity, though the different pursuits had not much affinity to the collection of honey.

It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters still courted their pillows on an occasion like this. They rose with the others; the grandmother and Beulah bestowing their care on the little Evert, as if *his* life and safety were the considerations uppermost in their thoughts. This seemed so natural, that Maud wondered she too could not feel all this absorbing interest in the child, a being so totally dependent on the affection of its friends and relatives to provide for

its wants and hazards in an emergency like the present.

"*We* will see to the child, Maud," observed her mother, ten or fifteen minutes after all were up and dressed. "Do you go to your brother, who will be solitary, alone in his citadel. He may wish, too, to send some message to his father. Go, then, dear girl, and help to keep up poor Bob's spirits."

What a service for Maud! Still, she went, without hesitation or delay; for the habits of her whole infancy were not to be totally overcome by the natural and more engrossing sentiments of her later years. She could not feel precisely the reserve and self-distrust with one she had so long regarded as a brother, as might have been the case with a stranger youth in whom she had begun to feel the interest she entertained for Robert Willoughby. But Maud did not hesitate about complying. An order from her mother to her was law; and she had no shame, no reserves, on the subject of contributing to Bob's comfort or happiness.

Her presence was a great relief to the young

man himself, whom she found in the library. His assistants were posted without, as sentinels to keep off intruders; a disposition that left him quite alone, anxious and uneasy. The only intercourse he could have with his father was by means of messages; and the part of the building he occupied was absolutely without any communication with the court, except by a single door near the offices, at which he had stationed O'Hearn.

"This is kind, and like yourself, dearest Maud," exclaimed the young man, taking the hand of his visitor, and pressing it in both of his own; though he strangely neglected to kiss her cheek, as he certainly would have done had it been Beulah. "This is kind, and like yourself; now I shall learn something of the state of the family. How is my mother?"

It might have been native coyness, or even coquetry, that, unconsciously to herself, influenced Maud's answer. She knew not why, and yet she felt prompted to let it be understood she had not come of her own impulses.

"Mother is well, and not at all alarmed," she

said. "She and Beulah are busy with little Evert, who crows and kicks his heels about as if *he* despised danger, as becomes a soldier's son, and has much amused even *me;* though I am accused of insensibility to his perfections. Believing you might be solitary, or might wish to communicate with some of us, my mother desired me to come and inquire into your wants."

"Was such a bidding required, Maud? How long has an order been necessary to bring *you* to console *me?*"

"That is a calculation I have never entered into, Bob," answered Maud, slightly blushing, and openly smiling, and that in a way too to take all the sting out of her words; "as young ladies can have more suitable occupations, one might think. You will admit I guided you faithfully and skilfully into the Hut last evening, and such a service should suffice for the present. But my mother tells me we have proper causes of complaint against you, for having so thoughtlessly left the place of safety into which you were brought, and

for going strolling about the valley, after we had retired, in a very heedless and boyish manner!"

"I went with my father; surely I could not have been in better company."

"At his suggestion, or at your own, Bob?" asked Maud, shaking her head.

"To own the truth, it was in some degree at my own. It seemed so very unmilitary for two old soldiers to allow themselves to be shut up in ignorance of what their enemies were at, that I could not resist the desire to make a little *sortie*. You must feel, dear Maud, that our motive was *your* safety,—the safety, I mean, of my mother, and Beulah, and all of you together, —and you ought to be the last to blame us."

The tint on Maud's cheek deepened as Robert Willoughby laid so heavy an emphasis on "*your* safety;" but she could not smile on an act that risked so much more than was prudent.

"This is well enough as to motive," she said, after a pause; "but frightfully ill-judged, I should think, as to the risks. You do not remember the importance our dear father is to us all—to my mother—to Beulah—even to me, Bob."

"Even to *you*, Maud!—And why not as much to *you* as to any of us?"

Maud could speak to Beulah of her want of natural affinity to the family, but it far exceeded her self-command to make a direct allusion to it to Robert Willoughby. Still, it was now rarely absent from her mind; the love she bore the captain and his wife, and Beulah and little Evert, coming to her heart through a more insidious and possibly tenderer tie than that of purely filial or sisterly affection. It was, indeed, this every-day regard, strangely deepened and enlivened by that collateral feeling we so freely bestow on them who are bound by natural ties to those who have the strongest hold on our hearts, and which causes us to see with their eyes, and to feel with their affections. Accordingly, no reply was made to the question; or, rather, it was answered by putting another.

"Did you see anything, after all, to compensate for so much risk?" asked Maud, but not until a pause had betrayed her embarrassment.

"We ascertained that the savages had deserted their fires, and had not entered any of the

cabins. Whether this were done to mislead us, or to make a retreat as sudden and unexpected as their inroad, we are altogether in the dark. My father apprehends treachery, however; while, I confess, to me it seems probable that the arrival and the departure may be altogether matters of accident. The Indians are in motion certainly, for it is known that our agents are busy among them; but it is by no means so clear that *our* Indians would molest Captain Willoughby—Sir Hugh Willoughby, as my father is altogether called at head-quarters."

"Have not the Americans savages on their side, to do us this ill office?"

"I think not. It is the interest of the rebels to keep the savages out of the struggle; they have so much at risk, that this species of warfare can scarcely be to *their* liking."

"And ought it to be to the liking of the king's generals, or ministers either, Bob?"

"Perhaps not, Maud. I do not defend it; but I have seen enough of politics and war to know that results are looked to far more than principles. Honour, and chivalry, and humanity, and

virtue, and right, are freely used in terms; but seldom do they produce much influence on facts. Victory is the end aimed at, and the means are made to vary with the object."

"And where is all we have read together?—Yes, *together*, Bob! for I owe you a great deal for having directed my studies. Where is all we have read about the glory and truth of the English name and cause?"

"Very much, I fear, Maud, where the glory and truth of the American name and cause will be as soon as this new nation shall fairly burst the shell and hatch its public morality. There are men among us who believe in this public honesty, but I do not."

"You are then engaged in a bad cause, Major Willoughby; and the sooner you abandon it, the better."

"I would in a minute, if I knew where to find a better. Rely on it, dearest Maud, all causes are alike in this particular; though one side may employ instruments, as in the case of the savages, that the other side finds it its interest to decry. Men, as individuals, *may* be, and some-

times *are*, reasonably upright; but *bodies* of men, I much fear, never. The latter escape responsibility by dividing it."

"Still, a good cause may elevate even bodies of men," said Maud thoughtfully.

"For a time, perhaps, but not in emergencies. You and I think it a good cause, my good and frowning Maud, to defend the rights of our sovereign lord the king. Beulah I have given up to the enemy, but on you I implicitly relied."

"Beulah follows her heart, perhaps, as they say it is natural to women to do. As for myself, I am left free to follow my own opinion of my duties."

"And they lead you to espouse the cause of the king, Maud?"

"They will be very apt to be influenced by the notions of a certain Captain Willoughby and Wilhelmina his wife, who have guided me aright on so many occasions that I shall not easily distrust their opinions on this."

The major disliked this answer; and yet, when he came to reflect on it, as reflect he did a good deal in the course of the day, he was dissatisfied

with himself at being so unreasonable as to expect a girl of twenty-one not to think with her parents, real or presumed, in most matters. At the moment, however, he did not wish further to press the point.

"I am glad to learn, Bob," resumed Maud, looking more cheerful and smiling, "that you met with no one in your rash sortie; for rash I shall call it, even though sanctioned by my father."

"I am wrong in saying that. We did meet with one man, and that was no less a person than your bugbear, Joel Strides, as innocent though as meddling an overseer as one could wish to employ."

"Robert Willoughby, what mean you? Does this man know of your presence at the Knoll?"

"I should hope not — *think* not." Here the major explained all that is known to the reader on this head, when he continued: "The fellow's curiosity brought his face within a few inches of mine; yet I do not believe he recognised me. This disguise is pretty thorough; and, what with his ignorance, the darkness, and the dress, I must believe he was foiled."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Maud, breathing more freely. "I have long distrusted that man, though he seems to possess the confidence of every one else. Neither my father nor my mother will see him as I see him; yet to me his design to injure you is *so* clear, *so* obvious, I wonder, often wonder, that others cannot view it as I do. Even Beulah is blind!"

"And what do you see so clearly, Maud? I have consented to keep myself incog. in submission to your earnest request; and yet, to own the truth, I can discover no particular reason why Strides is to be distrusted more than any one else in the valley,—than Mike, for instance."

"Mike! I would answer for *his* truth with my life. *He* will never betray you, Bob."

"But why is Joel so much the cause of your distrust? And why am *I* the particular subject of your apprehensions?"

Maud felt the tell-tale blood flowing again to her checks, since to give a simple and clear reason for her distrust exceeded her power. It was nothing but the keen interest which she took in Robert Willoughby's safety that had betrayed to

her the truth; and, as usually happens when anxiety leads the way in discoveries of this sort, logical and plausible inferences are not always at command. Still, Maud not only thought herself right, but, in the main, she *was* right; and this she felt so strongly as to be enabled to induce others to act on her impressions.

"*Why* I believe in Strides' sinister views is more than I may be able to explain to you in words, Bob," she replied, after a moment's thought; "still, I *do* believe in them as firmly as I believe in my existence. His looks, his questions, his journeys, and an occasional remark, have all aided in influencing the belief; nevertheless, no one proof may be perfectly clear and satisfactory. Why *you* should be the subject of his plans, however, is simple enough, since you are the only one among us he can seriously injure. By betraying you, he might gain some great advantage to himself."

"To whom can he betray me, dear? My father is the only person here in any authority, and of him I have no cause to be afraid."

"Yet you were so far alarmed, when last here, as to change your route back to Boston. If there were cause for apprehension then, the same reason may now exist."

"That was when many strangers were in the valley, and we knew not exactly where we stood. I have submitted to your wishes, however, Maud, and shall lie *perdu* until there is a serious alarm; then it is understood I am to be permitted to show myself. In a moment of emergency my unexpected appearance among the men might have a dramatic effect, and, of itself, give us a victory. But tell me of my prospects: am I likely to succeed with my father? Will he be brought over to the royal cause?"

"I think not. All common inducements are lost on him. His baronetcy, for instance, he will never assume; *that*, therefore, cannot entice him. Then, his feelings are with his adopted country, which he thinks right, and which he is much disposed to maintain; more particularly since Beulah's marriage, and our late intercourse with all that set. My mother's family, too, has

much influence with him. They, you know, are all Whigs."

"Don't prostitute the name, Maud. Whig does not mean rebel; these misguided men are neither more nor less than rebels. I had thought this declaration of independence would have brought my father at once to our side."

"I can see it has disturbed him, as did the battle of Bunker's Hill. But he will reflect a few days, and decide now, as he did then, in favour of the Americans. He has English partialities, Bob, as is natural to one born in that country; but on this point his mind is very strongly American."

"The accursed Knoll has done this! Had he lived in society, as he ought to have done, among his equals and the educated, we should now see him at the head—Maud, I know I can confide in *you*."

Maud was pleased at this expression of confidence, and she looked up in the major's face, her full blue eyes expressing no small portion of the heartfelt satisfaction she experienced. Still, she said nothing.

"You may well imagine," the major continued, "that I have not made this journey entirely without an object—I mean some object more important even than to see you all. The commander-in-chief is empowered to raise several regiments in this country, and it is thought useful to put men of influence in the colonies at their head. Old Noll de Lancey, for instance, so well known to us all, is to have a brigade; and I have a letter in my pocket offering to Sir Hugh Willoughby one of his regiments. One of the Allens of Pennsylvania, who was actually serving against us, has thrown up his commission from congress, since this wicked declaration, and has consented to take a battalion from the king. What think you of all this? Will it not have weight with my father?"

"It may cause him to reflect, Bob; but it will not induce him to change his mind. It may suit Mr. Oliver de Lancey to be a general, for he has been a soldier his whole life; but my father has retired, and given up all thoughts of service. He tells us he never liked it, and has been happier here at the Knoll than when he

got his first commission. Mr. Allen's change of opinion may be well enough, he will say, but I have no need of change. I am here with my wife and daughters, and have them to care for in these troubled times. What think you he said, Bob, in one of his conversations with us on this very subject?"

"I am sure I cannot imagine, though I rather fear it was some wretched political stuff of the day."

"So far from this, it was good natural feeling that belongs, or ought to belong, to all days and all ages," answered Maud, her voice trembling a little as she proceeded. 'There is my son,' he said; 'one soldier is enough in a family like this. *He* keeps all our hearts anxious, and may cause them all to mourn.'"

Major Willoughby was mute for quite a minute, looking rebuked and thoughtful.

"I fear I do cause my parents concern," he at length answered; "and why should I endeavour to increase that of my excellent mother, by persuading her husband to return to the profession? If this were ordinary service, I could not think

of it. I do not know that I ought to think of it, as it is."

"Do not, dear Robert. We are all — that is, mother is—often miserable on your account; and why would you increase her sorrows? Remember that to tremble for one life is sufficient for a woman."

"My mother is miserable on *my* account!" answered the young man, who was thinking of anything but his father at that instant. "Does Beulah never express concern for me? or have her new ties completely driven her brother from her recollection? I know she can scarce wish me success; but she might still feel some uneasiness for an only brother. We are but two—"

Maud started, as if some frightful object glared before her eyes; then she sat in breathless silence, resolute to hear what would come next. But Robert Willoughby meant to pursue that idea no farther. He had so accustomed himself — had endeavoured even so to accustom himself—to think of Beulah as his only sister, that the words escaped him unconsciously. They

were no sooner uttered, however, than the recollection of their possible effect on Maud crossed his mind. Profoundly ignorant of the true nature of her feelings towards himself, he had ever shrunk from a direct avowal of his own sentiments, lest he might shock her, as a sister's ear would naturally be wounded by a declaration of attachment from a brother; and there were bitter moments when he fancied delicacy and honour would oblige him to carry his secret with him to the grave. Two minutes of frank communication might have dissipated all these scruples for ever; but how to obtain those minutes, or how to enter on the subject at all, were obstacles that often appeared insurmountable to the young man. As for Maud, she but imperfectly understood her own heart: true, she had conscious glimpses of its real state; but it was through those sudden and ungovernable impulses that were so strangely mingled with her affections. It was years, indeed, since she had ceased to think of Robert Willoughby as a brother, and had begun to view him with different eyes; still she struggled with her feel-

ings as against a weakness. The captain and his wife were her parents; Beulah her dearly, dearly beloved sister; little Evert her nephew; and even the collaterals in and about Albany came in for a due share of her regard; while Bob, though called Bob as before, though treated with a large portion of the confidence that was natural to the intimacy of her childhood, though loved with a tenderness he would have given even his high-prized commission to know, was no longer thought of as a brother. Often did Maud find herself thinking, if never saying, "Beulah may do that, for Beulah is his sister; but it would be wrong in me. I may write to him, talk freely and even confidentially with him, and be affectionate to him; all this is right, and I should be the most ungrateful creature on earth to act differently: but I cannot sit on his knee, as Beulah sometimes does; I cannot throw my arms around his neck when I kiss him, as Beulah does; I cannot pat his cheek, as Beulah does, when he says anything to laugh at; nor can I pry into his secrets, as Beulah does, or affects to do, to tease him.

I should be more reserved with one who has not a drop of my blood in his veins—no, not a single drop." In this way, indeed, Maud was rather fond of disclaiming any consanguinity with the family of Willoughby, even while she honoured and loved its two heads as parents. The long pause that succeeded the major's broken sentence was only interrupted by himself.

"It is vexatious to be shut up here in the dark, Maud," he said, "when every minute *may* bring an attack. This side of the house might be defended by you and Beulah, aided and enlightened by the arm and counsels of that young 'son of liberty,' little Evert; whereas the stockade in front may really need the presence of men who have some knowledge of the noble art. I wish there were a look-out to the front, that one might at least see the danger as it approached."

"If your presence is not indispensable here, I can lead you to my painting-room, where there is a loop directly opposite to the gate. That half of the garrets has no one in it."

The major accepted the proposal with joy,

and forthwith he proceeded to issue a few necessary orders to his subordinates before he followed Maud. When all was ready, the latter led the way, carrying a small silver lamp that she had brought with her on entering the library. The reader already understands that the Hut was built around a court; the portion of the building in the rear, or on the cliff, alone having windows that opened outward. This was as true of the roofs as of the perpendicular parts of the structure, the only exceptions being in the loops that had been cut in the half-story beneath the eaves. Of course the garrets were very extensive. They were occupied in part, however, by small rooms with dormer-windows; the latter of which opened on the court, with the exception of those above the cliff. It was on the roofs of these windows that Captain Willoughby had laid his platform, or walk, with a view to extinguish fires or to defend the place. There were many rooms also that were lighted only by the loops, and which, of course, were on the outer side of the buildings. In addition to these arrangements, the garret portions of

the Hut were divided into two great parts, like the lower floor, without any doors of communication. Thus, below, the apartments commenced at the gateway, and extended along one half the front; the whole of the east wing, and the whole of the rear, occupying five-eighths of the entire structure. This part contained all the rooms occupied by the family, and the offices. The corresponding three-eighths, or the remaining half of the front, and the whole of the west wing, were given to visitors, and were now in possession of the people of the valley; as were all the rooms and garrets above them. On the other hand, Captain Willoughby, with a view to keep his family to itself, had excluded every one but the usual inmates from his own portion of the house, garret-rooms included.

Some of the garret-rooms, particularly those over the library, drawing-room, and parlour, were convenient and well-furnished little apartments; enjoying dormer-windows that opened on the meadows and forest, and possessing a very tolerable elevation for rooms of that particular construction. Here Mr. Woods lodged, and had his

study. The access was by a convenient flight of steps, placed in the vestibule that communicated with the court. A private and narrower flight also ascended from the offices.

Maud now led the way up the principal stairs—Mike being on post at the outer door to keep off impertinent eyes—followed by Robert Willoughby. Unlike most American houses, the Hut had few passages on its principal floor; the rooms communicating *en suite*, as a better arrangement where the buildings were so long, and yet so narrow. Above, however, one side was left in open garret; sometimes in front, and sometimes in the rear, as the light came from the court, or from without. Into this garret, then, Maud conducted the major, passing a line of humble rooms on her right, which belonged to the families of the Plinies and the Smashes, with their connections, until she reached the front range of the buildings. Here the order was changed along the half of the structure reserved to the use of the family; the rooms being on the outer side lighted merely by the loops, while opposite to them was an

open garret with windows that overlooked the court.

Passing into the garret just mentioned, Maud soon reached the door of the little room she sought. It was an apartment she had selected for painting, on account of the light from the loop, which in the morning was particularly favourable, though somewhat low. As she usually sat on a little stool, however, this difficulty was in some measure obviated ; and, at all events, the place was made to answer her purposes. She kept the key herself, and the room, since Beulah's marriage in particular, was her sanctum ; no one entering it unless conducted by its mistress. Occasionally, Little Smash was admitted with a broom ; though Maud, for reasons known to herself, often preferred sweeping the small carpet that covered the centre of the floor with her own fair hands, in preference to suffering another to intrude.

The major was aware that Maud had used this room for the last seven years. It was here he had seen her handkerchief waving at the loop when he last departed ; and hundreds of times

since had he thought of this act of watchful affection with doubts that led equally to pain or pleasure, as images of merely sisterly care, or of a tenderer feeling, obtruded themselves. These loops were four feet long, cut in the usual beveling manner through the massive timbers; were glazed, and had thick, bullet-proof, inside shutters, which in this room were divided into equal parts, in order to give Maud the proper use of the light she wanted. All these shutters were now closed by command of the captain, in order to conceal the lights that would be flickering through the different garrets; and so far had caution become a habit, that Maud seldom exposed her person at night, near the loop, with the shutter open.

On the present occasion she left the light without, and threw open the upper half of her heavy shutter, remarking, as she did so, that the day was just beginning to dawn.

"In a few minutes it will be light," she added; "then we shall be able to see who is, and who is not, in the valley. Look, you can perceive my father near the gate at this moment."

"I do, to my shame, Maud. He should not be there, while I am cooped up here, behind timbers that are almost shot-proof."

"It will be time for you to go to the front, as you soldiers call it, when there is an enemy to face. You cannot think there is any danger of an attack upon the Hut this morning."

"Certainly not. It is now too late. If intended at all, it would have been made before that streak of light appeared in the east."

"Then close the shutter, and I will bring in the lamp and show you some of my sketches. We artists are thirsting always for praise; and I know you have a taste, Bob, that one might dread."

"This is kind of you, dear Maud," answered the major, closing the shutter; "for they tell me you are niggardly of bestowing such favours. I hear you have got to likenesses — little Evert's, in particular."

CHAPTER VII.

Anxious, she hovers o'er the web the while;
Reads, as it grows, thy figured story there:
Now she explains the texture with a smile,
And now the woof interprets with a tear.

FAWCETT.

ALL Maud's feelings were healthful and natural. She had no exaggerated sentiments, and scarcely art enough to control or to conceal any of the ordinary impulses of her heart. We are not about to relate a scene, therefore, in which a long-cherished but hidden miniature of the young man is to play a conspicuous part, and to be the means of revealing to two lovers the state of their respective hearts; but one of a very different character. It is true, Maud had endeavoured to make, from memory, one or two sketches of "Bob's" face; but she had done it openly, and under the cognizance of the whole family. This she might very well do, indeed, in her usual cha-

racter of a sister, and excite no comments. In these efforts, her father, and mother, and Beulah had uniformly pronounced her success to be far beyond their hopes; but Maud herself had thrown them all aside half-finished, dissatisfied with her own labours. Like the author whose fertile imagination fancies pictures that defy his powers of description, her pencil ever fell far short of the face that her memory kept so constantly in view. This sketch wanted animation; that, gentleness; another, fire; and a fourth, candour: in short, had Maud begun a thousand, all would have been deficient, in her eyes, in some great essential of perfection. Still, she had no secret about her efforts, and half-a-dozen of these very sketches lay uppermost in her portfolio when she spread it and its contents before the eyes of the original.

Major Willoughby thought Maud had never appeared more beautiful than as she moved about making her little preparations for the exhibition. Pleasure heightened her colour; and there was such a mixture of frank, sisterly regard in every glance of her eye, blended,

however, with sensitive feeling and conscious womanly reserve, as made her a thousand times —measuring amounts by the young man's sensations — more interesting than he had ever seen her. The lamp gave but an indifferent light for a gallery; but it was sufficient to betray Maud's smiles, and blushes, and each varying emotion of her charming countenance.

"Now, Bob," she said, opening her portfolio, with all her youthful frankness and confidence, "you know well enough I am not one of those old masters of whom you used to talk so much, but your own pupil — the work of your own hands; and, if you find more faults than you have expected, you will have the goodness to remember that the master has deserted his peaceful pursuits to go a campaigning. There!—that is a caricature of your own countenance, staring you in the face as a preface!"

"This is like, I should think: was it done from memory, dear Maud?"

"How else should it be done? All our entreaties have never been able to persuade

you to send us even a miniature. You are wrong in this, Bob."—By no accident did Maud now ever call the major Robert, though Beulah often did. There was a desperate sort of familiarity in the *Bob* that she could easily adopt, but the "Robert" had a family sound that she disliked; and yet a more truly feminine creature than Maud Meredith did not exist.—"You are wrong, Bob; for mother actually pines to possess your picture in some shape or other. It was this wish that induced me to attempt these things."

"And why has no one of them ever been finished? Here are six or eight beginnings, and all more or less like, I should think, and not one of them more than half done. Why have I been treated so cavalierly, Miss Maud?"

The fair artist's colour deepened a little, but her smile was quite as sweet as it was saucy, as she replied—

"Girlish caprice, I suppose. I like neither of them; and, of that which a woman dislikes, she will have none. To be candid, however,

I hardly think there is one of them all that does you justice."

"No!—what fault have you to find with this? This might be worked up to something very natural."

"It would be *a* natural, then: it wants expression fearfully."

"And this, which is still better. That might be finished while I am here, and I will give you some sittings."

"Even mother dislikes *that:* there is too much of the Major of Foot in it. Mr. Woods says it is a martial picture."

"And ought not a soldier to look like a soldier? To me, now, that seems a capital beginning."

"It is not what mother, or Beulah, or father, or even any of us wants. It is too full of Bunker's Hill. Your friends desire to see you as you appear to *them;* not as you appear to your enemies."

"Upon my word, Maud, you have made great advances in the art! This is a view of the Knoll, and the dam; and here is another,

of the mill, and the water-fall;—all beautifully done, and in water-colours, too. What is this? Have you been attempting a sketch of yourself!—The glass must have been closely consulted, my fair coquette, to enable you to do this!"

The blood had rushed into Maud's face, covering it with a rich tell-tale mantle, when her companion first alluded to the half-finished miniature he held in his hand; then her features resembled ivory, as the revulsion of feeling, that overcame her confusion, followed. For some little time she sat in breathless stillness, with her looks cast upon the floor, conscious that Robert Willoughby was glancing from her own face to the miniature, and from the miniature to her face again, making his observations and comparisons. Then she ventured to raise her eyes timidly towards his, half-imploringly, as if to beseech him to proceed to something else. But the young man was too much engrossed with the exceedingly pretty sketch he held in his hand, to understand her meaning, or to comply with her wishes.

"This is yourself, Maud!" he cried, "though in a strange sort of dress; why have you spoilt so beautiful a thing by putting it in this masquerade?"

"It is not myself; it is a copy of—a miniature I possess."

"A miniature you possess!—Of whom can you possess so lovely a miniature, and I never see it?"

A faint smile illumined the countenance of Maud, and the blood began to return to her cheeks. She stretched her hand over to the sketch, and gazed on it with intense feeling, until the tears began to stream from her eyes.

"Maud—dear, *dearest* Maud—have I said that which pains you? I do not understand all this; but I confess there are secrets to which I can have no claim to be admitted."

"Nay, Bob, this is making too much of what, after all, must sooner or later be spoken of openly among us. I believe that to be a copy of a miniature of my mother."

"Of mother! Maud? you are beside yourself! it has neither her features, expression, nor the

colour of her eyes. It is the picture of a far handsomer woman, though mother is still pretty: and it is perfection !"

"I mean of *my* mother—of Maud Yeardley; the wife of my father, Major Meredith."

This was said with a steadiness that surprised our heroine herself, when she came to think over all that had passed, and it brought the blood to her companion's heart in a torrent.

"This is strange!" exclaimed Willoughby, after a short pause. "And *my* mother—*our* mother—has given you the original, and told you this? I did not believe she could muster the resolution necessary to such an act."

"She has not. You know, Bob, I am now of age; and my father, a month since, put some papers in my hand, with a request that I would read them. They contain a marriage settlement and other things of that sort, which show that I am mistress of more money than I should know what to do with, if it were not for dear little Evert: but, with such a precious being to love, one never can have too much of anything. With the papers were many trinkets, which I suppose

father never looked at. This beautiful miniature was among the last; and I feel certain, from some remarks I ventured to make, mother does not know of its existence."

As Maud spoke, she drew the original from her bosom, and placed it in Robert Willoughby's hands. When this simple act was performed, her mind seemed relieved; and she waited with strong natural interest to hear Robert Willoughby's comments.

"This, then, Maud, was your *own*—your *real* mother!" the young man said, after studying the miniature with a thoughtful countenance for near a minute. "It is *like* her—like *you*."

"Like *her*, Bob?—How can you know anything of that?—I suppose it to be my mother, because I think it like myself, and because it is not easy to say who else it can be. But you cannot know anything of this?"

"You are mistaken, Maud; I remember both your parents well: it could not be otherwise, as they were the bosom friends of my own. You will remember that I am now eight-and-twenty, and that I had seen seven of these years when

you were born. Was my first effort in arms never spoken of in your presence?"

"Never: perhaps it was not a subject for me to hear, if it were in any manner connected with my parents."

"You are right; that must be the reason it has been kept from your ears."

"Surely, surely, I am old enough to hear it *now! You* will conceal nothing from me, Bob?"

"If I would, I could not, now. It is too late, Maud. You know the manner in which Major Meredith died?"

"He fell in battle, I have suspected," answered the daughter, in a suppressed and doubtful tone; "for no one has ever directly told me even that."

"He did, and I was at his side. The French and savages made an assault on us, about an hour earlier than this, and our two fathers rushed to the pickets to repel it: I was a reckless boy, anxious even at that tender age to see a fray, and was at their side. Your father was one of the first that fell; but Joyce and *our* father beat the Indians back from his body, and saved it from

mutilation. Your mother was buried in the same grave; and then you came to us, where you have been ever since."

Maud's tears flowed fast; and yet it was not so much in grief as in a gush of tenderness she could hardly explain to herself. Robert Willoughby understood her emotions, and perceived that he might proceed.

"I was old enough to remember both your parents well. I was a favourite, I believe, with, certainly was much petted by, both. I remember your birth, Maud, and was suffered to carry you in my arms ere you were a week old."

"Then you have known me for an impostor from the beginning, Bob — must have often thought of me as such!"

"I have known you for the daughter of Lewellen Meredith, certainly; and not for a world would I have you the real child of Hugh Willoughby——"

"Bob!" exclaimed Maud, her heart beating violently, a rush of feeling nearly overcoming her; in which alarm, consciousness, her own secret, dread of something wrong, and a con-

fused glimpse of the truth, were all so blended as nearly to deprive her, for the moment, of the use of her senses.

It is not easy to say precisely what would have followed this tolerably explicit insight into the state of the young man's feelings, had not an outcry on the lawn given the major notice that his presence was needed below. With a few words of encouragement to Maud, first taking the precaution to extinguish the lamp, lest its light should expose her to a shot in passing some of the open loops, he sprang towards the stairs, and was at his post again literally within a minute. Nor was he a moment too soon. The alarm was general; and it was understood an assault was momentarily expected.

The situation of Robert Willoughby was now tantalizing in the extreme. Ignorant of what was going on in front, he saw no enemy in the rear to oppose, and was condemned to inaction at a moment when he felt that, by training, years, affinity to the master of the place, and all the usual considerations, he ought to be in front, opposed to the enemy. It is probable

he would have forgotten his many cautions to keep close, had not Maud appeared in the library, and implored him to remain concealed, at least until there was the certainty that his presence was necessary elsewhere.

At that instant every feeling but those connected with the danger was, in a degree, forgotten. Still, Willoughby had enough consideration for Maud to insist on her joining her mother and Beulah in the portion of the building where the absence of external windows rendered their security complete so long as the foe could be kept without the palisades. In this he succeeded, but not until he had promised, again and again, to be cautious in not exposing himself at any of the windows, the day having now fairly dawned; and, particularly, not to let it be known in the Hut that he was present, until it became indispensable.

The major felt relieved when Maud had left him. For her he had no longer any immediate apprehensions; and he turned all his faculties to the sounds of the assault which he supposed to be going on in front. To his surprise, how-

ever, no discharges of fire-arms succeeded; and even the cries, and orders, and calling from point to point, that are a little apt to succeed an alarm in an irregular garrison, had entirely ceased; and it became doubtful whether the whole commotion did not proceed from a false alarm. The Smashes, in particular, whose vociferations for the first few minutes had been of a very decided kind, were now mute; and the exclamations of the women and children had ceased.

Major Willoughby was too good a soldier to abandon his post without orders, though bitterly did he regret the facility with which he had consented to accept so inconsiderable a command. He so far disregarded his instructions, however, as to place his whole person before a window, in order to reconnoitre; for it was now broad daylight, though the sun had not yet risen. Nothing rewarded this careless exposure; and then it flashed upon his mind, that, as the commander of a separate detachment, he had a perfect right to employ any of his immediate subordinates either as messengers or scouts. His choice of

an agent was somewhat limited, it is true, lying between Mike and the Plinies: after a moment of reflection, he determined to choose the former.

Mike was duly relieved from his station at the door, the younger Pliny being substituted for him, and he was led into the library. Here he received hasty but clear orders from the major how he was to proceed; and was thrust, rather than conducted, from the room, in his superior's haste to hear the tidings. Three or four minutes might have elapsed, when an irregular volley of musketry was heard in front; then succeeded an answering discharge, which sounded smothered and distant. A single musket came from the garrison a minute later; and then Mike rushed into the library, his eyes dilated with a sort of wild delight, dragging, rather than carrying, his piece after him.

"The news?" exclaimed the major, as soon as he got a glimpse of his messenger. "What mean these volleys, and how comes on my father in front?"

"Is it what do they mane?" answered Mike. "Well, there's but one maning to powther and

ball, and that's far more sarious than shillelah wor-r-k. If the rapscallions didn't fire a whole plathoon, as Serjeant Joyce calls it, right at the Knoll, my name is not Michael O'Hearn, or my nature one that dales in giving back as good as I get."

"But the volley came first from the house. Why did my father order his people to make the first discharge?"

"For the same r'ason that he didn't. Och! there was a big frown on his f'atures when he heard the rifles and muskets; and Mr. Woods never pr'ached more to the purpose than the serjeant himself, ag'in that same. But to think of them rapscallions answering a fire that was ag'in orders! Not a word did his honour say about shooting any of them, and they just pulled their triggers on the house all the same as if it had been logs growing in senseless and uninhabited trees, instead of a rational and well p'apled abode. Och! ar'n't they vagabonds?"

"If you do not wish to drive me mad, man, tell me clearly what has passed, that I may understand you."

"Is it understand that's wanting? Lord, yer honour, if ye can understand that Misther Sthrides that 's yon, ye 'll be a wise man. He calls hisself a 'son of the Poor'atin's;' and poor 'ating it must have been in the counthry of his faders, to have produced so lane and skinny a baste as that same. The orders was as partic'lar as tongue of man could utter, and what good will it all do? Ye 're not to fire, says Serjeant Joyce, till ye all hear the wor-r-d: and the divil of a wor-r-d did they wait for; but blaze away did they, jist becaase a knot of savages comes on to them rocks ag'in, where they had possession all yesterday afthernoon,—and sure it is common enough to breakfast where a man sups."

"You mean to say that the Indians have re-appeared on the rocks, and that some of Strides' men fired at them without orders?—Is that the history of the affair?"

"It 's jist that, majjor; and little good, or little har-r-m, did it do. Joel and his Poor'atin's blazed away at 'em as if they had been so many Christians; and 'twould have done yer heart good to have heard the serjeant belabour them

with hard wor-r-ds for their throuble. There 's none of the Poor'atin' family in the serjeant, who 's a mighty man wid his tongue."

" And the savages returned the volley—which explains the distant discharge I heard?"

" Anybody can see, majjor, that ye 're yer father's son, and a souldier bor-r-n. Och! who would have t'ought of that, but one bred and bor-r-n in the army? Yes; the savages sent back as good as they got, which was jist not'in' at all, seein' that no one is har-r-m'd."

" And the single piece that followed—there was one discharge by itself?"

Mike opened his mouth with a grin that might have put either of the Plinies to shame, it being rather a favourite theory with the descendants of the Puritans—or "Poor'atin's," as the County-Leitrim man called Joel and his set,—that the Irishman was more than a match for any son of Ham at the Knoll in the way of capacity about this portion of the human countenance. The major saw that there was a good deal of self-felicitation in the expression of Mike's visage,

and he demanded an explanation in more direct terms.

"'Twas I did it, majjor, and 'twas as well fired a piece as ye've ever hear-r-d in the king's sarvice. Divil bur-r-n me, if I lets Joel get any such advantage over me as to have a whole battle to himself! No, no: as soon as I smelt his Yankee powther, and could get my own musket cock'd, and pointed out of the forthifications, I lets 'em have it, as if it had been so much breakfast ready cooked to their hands. 'Twas well pointed, too; for I'm not the man to shoot into a fri'nd's countenance."

"And you broke the orders for a reason no better than the fact that Strides had broken them before?"

"Divil a bit, majjor. Joel had *broken* the orders, ye see; and that settled the matter. The thing that is once broken is broken, and wor-r-ds can't mend it, any more than forbearin' to fire a gun will mend it."

By dint of cross-questioning, Robert Willoughby finally succeeded in getting something

like an outline of the truth from Mike. The simple facts were, that the Indians had taken possession of their old bivouac as soon as the day dawned, and had commenced their preparations for breakfast, when Joel, the miller, and a few of that set, in a paroxysm of valour, had discharged a harmless volley at them; the distance rendering the attempt futile. This fire had been partially returned; the whole concluding with the *finale* from the Irishman's gun, as has been related. As it was now too light to apprehend a surprise, and the ground in front of the palisade had no very dangerous covers, Robert Willoughby was emboldened to send one of the Plinies to request an interview with his father. In a few minutes the latter appeared, accompanied by Mr. Woods.

"The same party has reappeared, and seems disposed to occupy its old position near the mill," said the captain, in answer to his son's inquiries. "It is difficult to say what the fellows have in view; and there are moments when I think there are more or less whites among them. I suggested as much to Strides, chaplain; and I

thought the fellow appeared to receive the notion as if he thought it might be true."

"Joel is a little of an enigma to me, Captain Willoughby," returned the chaplain; "sometimes seizing an idea like a cat pouncing upon a rat, and then coquetting with it, as the same cat will play with a mouse when it has no appetite for food."

"Och! he 's a precious Poor'atin'!" growled Mike from his corner of the room.

"If whites are among the savages, why should they not make themselves known?" demanded Robert Willoughby. "Your character, sir, is no secret; and they must be acquainted with their own errand here."

"I will send for Strides, and get his opinion a little more freely," answered the captain, after a moment of deliberation. "You will withdraw, Bob; though, by leaving your door a little ajar, the conversation will reach you, and prevent the necessity of a repetition."

As Robert Willoughby was not unwilling to hear what the overseer might have to say in the present state of things, he did not hesitate about complying; withdrawing into his own room as

requested, and leaving the door ajar, in a way to prevent suspicion of his presence as far as possible. But Joel Strides, like all bad men, ever suspected the worst. The innocent and pure of mind alone are without distrust; while one constituted morally like the overseer never permitted his thoughts to remain in the tranquillity that is a fruit of confidence. Conscious of his own evil intentions, his very nature put on armour against the same species of machinations in others; as the hedgehog rolls himself into a ball, and thrusts out his quills, at the sight of the dog. Had not Captain Willoughby been one of those who are slow to see evil, he might have detected something wrong in Joel's feelings by the very first glance he cast about him on entering the library.

In point of fact, Strides' thoughts had not been idle since the rencontre of the previous night. Inquisitive, and under none of the usual restraints of delicacy, he had already probed all he dared approach on the subject, and by this time had become perfectly assured that there was some mystery about the unknown individual whom he had met in his master's company. To own the

truth, Joel did not suspect that Major Willoughby had again ventured so far into the lion's den; but he fancied that some secret agent of the Crown was at the Hut, and that the circumstance offered a fair opening for helping the captain down the ladder of public favour, and to push himself up a few of its rounds. He was not sorry, therefore, to be summoned to this conference, hoping it might lead to some opening for farther discoveries.

"Sit down, Strides," said Captain Willoughby, motioning towards a chair so distant from the open door of the bedroom, and so placed as to remove the danger of too close a proximity, "sit down; I wish to consult you about the state of things towards the mills. To me it seems as if there were more pale-faces than red-skins among our visitors."

"That 's not onlikely, captain; the people has got to be greatly given to paintin' and imitatin', sin' the hatchet has been dug up ag'in the British. The tea-boys were all in Indian fashion."

"True; but why should white men assume

such a disguise to come to the Knoll? I am not conscious of having an enemy on earth who could meditate harm to me or mine."

Alas! poor captain. That a man at sixty should yet have to learn that the honest, and fair-dealing, and plain-dealing, and affluent—for Captain Willoughby was affluent in the eyes of those around him — that such a man should imagine he was without enemies, was to infer that the Spirit of Darkness had ceased to exercise his functions among men. Joel knew better, though he did not perceive any necessity, just then, for letting the fact reach the ears of the party principally concerned.

"A body might s'pose the captain was pop'lar, if any man is pop'lar," answered the overseer; "nor do I know that visitors in paint betoken onpopularity to a person in these times more than another. May I ask why the captain consaits these Injins a'n't Injins? To me they have a desperate savage look, though I a'n't much accustomed to red-skin usages."

"Their movements are too open, and yet too uncertain, for warriors of the tribes. I think

a savage, by this time, would have made up his mind to act as friend or foe."

Joel seemed struck with the idea; and the expression of his countenance, which on entering had been wily, distrustful, and prying, suddenly changed to that of deep reflection.

"Has the captain seen anything else partic'lar to confirm this idee?" he asked.

"Their encampment, careless manner of moving, and unguarded exposure of their persons, are all against their being Indians."

"The messenger they sent across the meadow yesterday *seemed* to me to be a Mohawk?"

"He was. Of *his* being a real red-skin there can be no question. But he could neither speak nor understand English. The little that passed between us was in Low Dutch. Our dialogue was short; for, apprehensive of treachery, I brought it to a close sooner than I might otherwise have done."

"Yes; treachery is a cruel thing," observed the conscientious Joel; "a man can't be too strongly on his guard ag'in it. Does the captain raally calcilate on defending the house,

should a serious attempt be brought forward for the day?"

"Do I! That is an extraordinary question, Mr. Strides. Why have I built in this mode, if I have no such intention? why palisaded? why armed and garrisoned, if not in earnest?"

"I s'posed all this might have been done to prevent a surprise, but not in any hope of standin' a siege. I should be sorry to see all our women and children shut up under one roof, if the inimy came ag'in us in airnest with fire and sword."

"And I should be sorry to see them anywhere else. But this is losing time.—My object in sending for you, Joel, was to learn your opinion about the true character of our visitors. Have you any opinion or information to give me on that point?"

Joel placed his elbow on his knee, and his chin in the palm of his hand, and pondered on what had been suggested, with seeming goodwill and great earnestness.

"If any one could be found venturesome enough to go out with a flag," he at length

remarked, "the whole truth might be come at in a few minutes."

"And who shall I employ? Cheerfully would I go myself, were such a step military, or at all excusable in one in my situation."

"If the likes of myself will sarve yer honour's turn," put in Mike promptly, and yet with sufficient diffidence as regarded his views of his own qualifications, "there 'll be nobody to gainsay that same; and it isn't wilcome that I nade tell you ye 'll be to use me as ye would yer own property."

"I hardly think Mike would answer," observed Joel, not altogether without a sneer. "He scurce knows an Indian from a white man; when it comes to the paint, it would throw him into dreadful confusion."

"If ye thinks that I am to be made to believe in any more Ould Nicks, Misther Sthrides, then ye 're making a mistake in my nature. Let but the captain say the word, and I 'll go to the mill and bring in a grist of them same, or I'ave my own body for toll."

"I do not doubt you in the least, Mike,"

Captain Willoughby mildly observed; "but there will be no occasion just now for your running any such risks. I shall be able to find other truce-bearers."

"It seems, the captain has his man in view," Joel said, keenly eyeing his master. "Perhaps 'tis the same I saw out with him last night. That 's a reliable person, I do s'pose."

"You have hit the nail on the head. It was the man who was out last night, at the same time I was out myself, and his name is Joel Strides."

"The captain 's a little musical this morning. —Waal—if go I must, as there was two on us out, let us go to these savages together. I saw enough of *that* man to know he is reliable; and, if he 'll go, *I* 'll go."

"Agreed!" said Robert Willoughby, stepping into the library; "I take you at your word, Mr. Strides; you and I will run what risks there may be, in order to relieve this family from its present alarming state."

The captain was astounded, though he knew not whether to be displeased or to rejoice. As for Mike, his countenance expressed great dissa-

tisfaction, for he ever fancied things were going wrong so long as Joel obtained his wishes. Strides, himself, threw a keen glance at the stranger, recognised him at a glance, and had sufficient self-command to conceal his discovery, though taken completely by surprise. The presence of the major, however, immediately removed all his objections to the proposed expedition; since, should the party prove friendly to the Americans, he would be safe on his own account; or, should it prove the reverse, a king's officer could not fail to be a sufficient protection.

"The gentleman's a total stranger to me," Joel hypocritically resumed; "but, as the captain has belief in him, I must have the same. I am ready to do the ar'nd, therefore, as soon as it is agreeable."

"This is well, Captain Willoughby," put in the major, in order to anticipate any objections from his father; "and, the sooner a thing of this sort is done, the better it will be for all concerned. I am ready to proceed this instant; and, I take it, this worthy man—I think you called him Strides—is quite as willing."

Joel signified his assent; and the captain, perceiving no means of retreat, was fain to yield. He took the major into the bedroom, however, and held a minute's private discourse, when he returned, and bade the two go forth together.

"Your companion has his instructions, Joel," the captain observed, as they left the library together; "and you will follow his advice. Show the white flag as soon as you quit the gate; if they are true warriors, it must be respected."

Robert Willoughby was too intent on business, and too fearful of the reappearance and reproachful looks of Maud, to delay. He had passed the court, and was at the outer gate before any of the garrison even noted his appearance among them. Here indeed the father's heart felt a pang; and, but for his military pride, the captain would gladly have recalled his consent. It was too late, however; and, squeezing his hand, he suffered his son to pass outward. Joel followed steadily as to appearances, though not without misgivings as to what might be the consequences to himself and his growing family.

CHAPTER VIII.

I worship not the sun at noon,
The wandering stars, the changing moon,
The wind, the flood, the flame;
I will not bow the votive knee
To wisdom, virtue, liberty;
There is no god, but God, for me,
Jehovah is his name.

MONTGOMERY.

So sudden and unexpected had been the passage of Robert Willoughby through the court, and among the men on post without the inner gates, that no one recognised his person. A few saw that a stranger was in their midst; but, under his disguise, no one was quick enough of eye and thought to ascertain who that stranger was. The little white flag that they displayed denoted the errand of the messengers; the rest was left to conjecture.

As soon as Captain Willoughby ascertained that the alarm of the morning was not likely to lead to any immediate results, he had dismissed all the men, with the exception of a small guard, that was stationed near the outer gate under the immediate orders of Serjeant Joyce. The latter was one of those soldiers who view the details of the profession as forming its great essentials; and, when he saw his commander about to direct a *sortie*, it formed his pride not to ask questions, and to seem to know nothing about it. To this, Jamie Allen, who composed one of the guard, quietly assented; but it was a great privation to the three or four New England-men to be commanded not to inquire into the why and wherefore.

"Wait for orders, men, wait for orders," observed the serjeant, by way of quieting an impatience that was very apparent. "If his honour, the captain, wished us to be acquainted with his movements, he would direct a general parade, and lay the matter before us, as you know he always does on proper occasions. 'Tis a flag going out, as you can see; and,

should a truce follow, we'll lay aside our muskets, and seize the ploughshares; should it be a capitulation,— I know our brave old commander too well to suppose it possible,— but *should* it be even *that*, we'll ground arms like men, and make the best of it."

"And should Joel and the other man, who is a stranger to me, be scalped?" demanded one of the party.

"Then we 'll avenge their scalps. That was the way with us when my Lord Howe fell.— 'Avenge his death!' cried our colonel; and on we pushed, until near two thousand of us fell before the Frenchmen's trenches. Oh! *that* was a sight worth seeing, and a day to talk of!"

"Yes, but you were thrashed soundly, serjeant, as I've heard from many who were there."

"What of that, sir; we obeyed orders. 'Avenge his death!' was the cry; and on we pushed, in obedience, until there were not men enough left in our battalion to carry the wounded to the rear."

"And what did you do with them?" asked

a youth, who regarded the serjeant as another Cæsar—Napoleon not having come into notice in 1776.

"We let them lie where they fell. Young man, war teaches us all the wholesome lesson that impossibilities are impossible to be done. War is the great schoolmaster of the human race; and a learned man is he who has made nineteen or twenty campaigns."

"If he live to turn his lessons to account," remarked the first speaker with a sneer.

"If a man is to die in battle, sir, he had better die with his mind stored with knowledge, than be shot like a dog that has outlived his usefulness. Every pitched battle carries out of the world learning upon learning that has been got in the field. Here comes his honour, who will confirm all I tell you, men.—I was letting these men, sir, understand that the army and the field are the best schools on earth. Every old soldier will stick to that, your honour."

"We are apt to think so, Joyce.—Have the arms been inspected this morning?"

"As soon as it was light I did that myself, sir."

"Flints, cartridge-boxes, and bayonets, I hope?"

"Each and all, sir.—Does your honour remember the morning we had the affair near Fort du Quesne?"

"You mean Braddock's defeat, I suppose, Joyce?"

"I call nothing a defeat, Captain Willoughby. We were roughly handled that day, sir; but I am not satisfied it was a defeat. It is true we fell back, and lost some arms and stores; but, in the main, we stuck to our colours, considering it was in the woods. No, sir; I do not call that a defeat, by any means."

"You will at least own we were hard pressed, and might have fared worse than we did, had it not been for a certain colonial corps that manfully withstood the savages?"

"Yes, sir; that I allow. I remember the corps, and its commander, a Colonel Washington, with your honour's permission."

"It was indeed, Joyce. And do you happen to know what has become of this same Colonel Washington?"

"It never crossed my mind to inquire, sir, as he was a provincial. I dare say he may have a regiment, or even a brigade by this time; and good use would he make of either."

"You have fallen far behind his fortunes, Joyce. The man is a commander-in-chief—a captain-general."

"Your honour is jesting, since many of his seniors are still living."

"This is the man who leads the American armies in the war with England."

"Well, sir, in *that* way he may indeed get a quick step or two. I make no doubt, sir, so good a soldier will know how to obey orders."

"From which I infer you think him right in the cause he has espoused?"

"Bless your honour, sir, I think nothing about it, and care nothing about it. If the gentleman has taken service with Congress, as they call the new head-quarters, why he ought to obey Congress; and if he serve the King, his Majesty's orders should be attended to."

"And in this crisis, serjeant, may I ask in what particular service you conceive yourself to be just at the present moment?"

"Captain Willoughby's, late of his Majesty's —th regiment of Foot, at your honour's command."

"If all act in the same spirit, Joyce, we shall do well enough at the Knoll, though twice as many savages brave us as are to be seen on yon rocks," returned the captain, smiling.

"And why should they no?" demanded Jamie Allen earnestly. "Ye 're laird here, and we 've no the time, nor the grace, to study and understand the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of the quarrel atween the House of Hanover and the houses of these Americans; so, while we a' stand up for the house and household of our old maister, the Lord will smile on our efforts, and lea us to victory."

"Divil bur-r-n me, now, Jamie," said Mike, who, having seen the major to the gate, now followed his father, in readiness to do him any good turn that might offer, "Divil bur-r-n me, now, Jamie, if ye could have said it better had ye just aised yer conscience to a proper praist, and were talking on a clane breast! Stick up for the captain, says I, and the Lord will be on our side!"

The serjeant nodded approbation of this sentiment; and the younger Pliny, who happened also to be within hearing, uttered the sententious word "gosh," and clenched his fist, which was taken as proof of assent also on his part. But the Americans of the guard, all of whom were the tools of Joel's and the miller's arts, manifested a coldness that even exceeded the usual cold manner of their class. These men meant right; but they had been deluded by the falsehoods, machinations, and frauds of a demagogue, and were no longer masters of their own opinions or acts. It struck the captain that something was wrong; but, a foreigner by birth himself, he had early observed, and long known, the peculiar exterior and phlegm of the people of the country, which so nearly resemble the stoicism of the aborigines as to induce many writers to attribute both alike to a cause connected with climate. The present was not a moment, however, nor was the impression strong enough to induce the master of the place to enter into any inquiries. Turning his eyes in the direction of the two bearers of the flag, he there beheld mat-

ter for new interest, completely diverting his thoughts from what had just passed.

"I see they have sent two men to meet our messengers, serjeant," he said. "This looks as if they understood the laws of war."

"Quite true, your honour. They should now blindfold our party, and lead them within their own works, before they suffer them to see at all; though there would be no great advantage in it, as Strides is as well acquainted with every inch of that rock as I am with the manual exercise."

"Which would seem to supersede the necessity of the ceremony you have mentioned?"

"One never knows, your honour. Blindfolding is according to the rules; and I should blindfold a flag before I let him approach, though the hostile ranks stood drawn up, one on each side of a parade ground. Much is gained, while nothing is ever lost, by sticking to the rules of a trade."

The captain smiled, as did all the Americans of the guard; the last having too much sagacity not to perceive that a thing might be overdone, as well as too little attended to. As for Jamie and Mike, they both received the serjeant's opi-

nions as law: the one from having tried the troops of the line at Culloden, and the other on account of divers experiences through which he had gone at sundry fairs in his own green island. By this time, however, all were too curious in watching the result of the meeting, to continue the discourse.

Robert Willoughby and Joel had moved along the lane, towards the rocks, without hesitating, keeping their little flag flying. It did not appear that their approach produced any change among the savages, who were now preparing their breakfasts, until they had got within two hundred yards of the encampment, when two of the red-men, having first laid aside their arms, advanced to meet their visitors. This was the interview which attracted the attention of those at the Hut, and its progress was noted with the deepest interest.

The meeting appeared to be friendly. After a short conference, in which signs seemed to be a material agent in the communications, the four moved on in company, walking deliberately towards the rocks. Captain Willoughby had sent for his field-glass, and could easily perceive much

that occurred in the camp on the arrival of his son. The major's movements were calm and steady, and a feeling of pride passed over the father's heart as he noted this, amid a scene that was well adapted to disturb the equilibrium of the firmest mind. Joel certainly betrayed nervousness, though he kept close at his companion's side; and together they proceeded into the very centre of the party of strangers.

The captain observed, also, that this arrival caused no visible sensation among the red-men. Even those the major almost touched in passing did not look up to note his appearance; while no one seemed to speak, or in any manner to heed him. The cooking and other preparations for the breakfast proceeded precisely as if no one had entered the camp. The two who had gone forth to meet the flag alone attended its bearers, whom they led through the centre of the entire party; stopping only on the side opposite to the Hut, where there was an open space of flat rock, which it had not suited the savages to occupy.

Here the four halted; the major turning, and looking back like a soldier who was examining

his ground. Nor did any one appear disposed to interrupt him in an employment that Serjeant Joyce pronounced to be both bold and against the usages of war to permit. The captain thought the stoicism of the savages amounted to exaggeration, and it renewed his distrust of the real characters of his visitors. In a minute or two, however, some three or four of the red-men were seen consulting together apart; after which they approached the bearers of the flag, and some communications passed between the two sides. The nature of these communications could not be known, of course, though the conference appeared to be amicable. After two or three minutes of conversation, Robert Willoughby, Strides, the two men who had advanced to meet them, and the four chiefs who had joined the group, left the summit of the rock in company, taking a footpath that descended in the direction of the mills. In a short time they all disappeared in a body.

The distance was not so great but these movements could easily be seen by the naked eye, though the glass was necessary to discover some of the details. Captain Willoughby had planted

the instrument among the palisades, and he kept his gaze riveted on the retiring group as long as it was visible; then, indeed, he looked at his companions, as if to read their opinions in their countenances. Joyce understood the expression of his face; and, saluting in the usual military manner, he presumed to speak in the way of reply.

"It seems all right, your honour, the bandage excepted," said the serjeant. "The flag has been met at the outposts, and led into the camp: there the officer of the day, or some savage who does the duty, has heard his errand; and, no doubt, they have all now gone to head-quarters to report."

"I desired my son, Joyce—"

"Whom, your honour?"

The general movement told the captain how completely his auditors were taken by surprise at this unlooked-for announcement of the presence of the major at the Knoll. It was too late to recall the words, however; and there was so little prospect of Robert's escaping the penetration of Joel, that the father saw no use in attempting further concealment.

"I say, I desired my son, Major Willoughby, who is the bearer of that flag," the captain steadily resumed, "to raise his hat in a particular manner, if all seemed right; or to make a certain gesture with his left arm, did he see anything that required us to be more than usually on our guard."

"And which notice has he given to the garrison, if it be your honour's pleasure to let us know?"

"Neither. I thought he manifested an intention to make the signal with the hat when the chiefs first joined him, but he hesitated, and lowered his hand without doing as I had expected. Then, again, just as he disappeared behind the rocks, the left arm was in motion, though not in a way to complete the signal."

"Did he seem hurried, your honour, as if prevented from communicating by the enemy?"

"Not at all, Joyce. Irresolution appeared to be at the bottom of it, so far as I could judge."

"Pardon me, your honour; uncertainty would be a better word, as applied to so good a soldier.

Has Major Willoughby quitted the king's service, that he is among us, sir, just at this moment?"

"I will tell you his errand another time, serjeant. At present, I can only think of the risk he runs. These Indians are lawless wretches; one is never sure of their faith."

"They are bad enough, sir; but no man can well be so bad as to disregard the rights of a flag," answered the serjeant, in a grave and slightly important manner. "Even the French, your honour, have always respected our *flags*."

"That is true; and yet I wish we could overlook that position at the mill. It 's a great advantage to them, Joyce, that they can place themselves behind such a cover when they choose!"

The serjeant looked at the encampment a moment; then his eye followed the woods and the mountain sides that skirted the little plain, until his back was fairly turned upon the supposed enemy, and he faced the forest in the rear of the Hut.

"If it be agreeable to your honour, a detach-

ment can be detailed to make a demonstration"—Joyce did not exactly understand this word, but it sounded military,—"in the following manner: I can lead out the party by the rear of the house, using the brook as a covered-way. Once in the woods, it will be easy enough to make a flank movement upon the enemy's position; after which, the detachment can be guided by circumstances."

This was very martial in sound, and the captain felt well assured that Joyce was the man to attempt carrying out his own plan; but he made no answer, sighing and shaking his head as he walked away towards the house. The chaplain followed, leaving the rest to observe the savages.

"Ye're proposition, serjaint, no seems to give his honour much saitisfaction," said the mason, as soon as his superior was out of hearing. "Still, it was military, as I know by what I saw mysal' in the Forty-five. Flainking, and surprising, and obsairving, and demonstrating, and such devices, are the soul of war, and are a' on the great highway to victory. Had Chairlie's men obsairved and particularised mair, there

might have been a different family on the throne, an' the prince wad ha' got his ain ag'in. I like your idea much, serjaint; and, gin' ye gang oot to practise it, I trust ye 'll no forget that ye 've an auld fri'nd here willing to be of the pairty."

"I didn't think the captain much relished the notion of being questioned about his son's feelin's, and visit up here, at a time like this," put in one of the Americans.

"There 's bowels in the man's body!" cried Mike, "and it isn't the likes of him that has no falin'. Ye don't know what it is to be a father, or ye 'd groan in spirit to see a child of yer own in the grip of fiery divils like them same. Isn't he a pratty man, and wouldn't I be sorrowful to hear that he had come to har-r-m? Ye 've niver asked, serjeant, how the majjor got into the house, and ye a military sentry in the bargain!"

"I suppose he came by command, Michael; and it is not the duty of the non-commissioned officers to question their superiors about anything that has happened out of the common

way. I take things as I find them, and obey orders. I only hope that the son, as a field-officer, will not out-rank the father, which would be unbecoming; though date of commissions and superiority must be respected."

"I rather think, if a major in the king's service was to undertake to use authority here," said the spokesman of the Americans, a little stiffly, "he wouldn't find many disposed to follow at his heels."

"Mutiny would not fare well, did it dare to lift its head in this garrison," answered the sergeant, with a dignity that might better have suited the mess-room of a regular regiment than the situation in which he was actually placed. "Both Captain Willoughby and myself have seen mutiny attempted, but neither has ever seen it succeed."

"Do you look on us as lawful enlisted soldiers?" demanded one of the labourers, who had a sufficient smattering of the law to understand the difference between a mercenary and a volunteer. "If I'm regimented, I should at least like to know in whose service it is?"

"Ye 're over-quick at yer objections and sentiments," said Jamie Allen coolly, "like most youths who see only their ain experience in the airth, and the providence o' the Lord. Enlisted we are, a' of us, even to Michael here; and it 's in the sairvice of our good master, his honour Captain Willoughby, whom, with his kith and kin, may the Lord presairve from this and all other dangers!"

The word master would, of itself, be very likely to create a revolt to-day in such a corps as it was the fortune of our captain to command, though to that of "boss" there would not be raised the slightest objection. But the English language had not undergone half of its present mutations in the year 1776; and no one winced in admitting that he served a "master," though the gorges of several rose at the idea of being engaged in the service of any one, considered in a military point of view. It is likely the suggestion of the mason would have led to a hot discussion, had not a stir among the savages just at that instant called off the attention of all present to matters of

more importance than even an angry argument.

The movement seemed to be general, and Joyce ordered his men to stand to their arms; still, he hesitated about giving the alarm. Instead of advancing towards the Hut, however, the Indians raised a general yell, and went over the cliffs, disappearing in the direction of the mill, like a flock of birds taking wing together. After waiting half an hour, in vain, to ascertain if any signs of the return of the Indians were to be seen, the serjeant went himself to report the state of things to his commander.

Captain Willoughby had withdrawn to make his toilet for the day, when he saw the last of his son and the overseer. While thus employed, he had communicated to his wife all that had occurred; and Mrs. Willoughby, in her turn, had told the same to her daughters. Maud was much the most distressed, her suspicions of Joel being by far the most active and the most serious. From the instant she learned what had passed, she began to anticipate grave consequences to Robert Willoughby, though she

had sufficient fortitude, and sufficient consideration for others, to keep most of her apprehensions to herself.

When Joyce demanded his audience the family was at breakfast, though little was eaten, and less was said. The serjeant was admitted, and he told his story with military precision.

"This has a suspicious air, Joyce," observed the captain, after musing a little; "to me it seems like an attempt to induce us to follow, and to draw us into an ambuscade."

"It may be that, your honour; or, it may be a good honest retreat. *Two* prisoners is a considerable exploit for savages to achieve. I have known them count *one* a victory."

"Be not uneasy, Wilhelmina; Bob's rank will secure him good treatment: his exchange being far more important to his captors, if captors they be, than his death. It is too soon to decide on such a point, serjeant. After all, the Indians may be at the mills in council. On a war-path, all the young men are usually consulted before any important step is taken. Then, it may be the wish of the chiefs to im-

press our flag-bearers with an idea of their force."

"All that is military, your honour, and quite possible. Still, to me the movement seems as if a retreat was intended, in fact; or, that the *appearance* of one was in view."

"I will soon know the truth," cried the chaplain. "I, a man of peace, can surely go forth, and ascertain who these people are, and what is their object."

"You, Woods! My dear fellow, do you imagine a tribe of blood-thirsty savages will respect you, or your sacred office? You have a sufficient task with the king's forces, letting his enemies alone. You are no missionary to still a war-cry."

"I beg pardon, sir," put in the serjeant; "his reverence is more than half right."—Here the chaplain rose, and quitted the room in haste, unobserved by the two colloquists.—"There is scarce a tribe in the colony, your honour, that has not some knowledge of our priesthood; and I know of no instance in which the savages have ever ill-treated a divine."

"Poh, poh, Joyce; this is much too sentimental for your Mohawks, and Oneidas, and Onondagas, and Tuscaroras. They will care no more for little Woods than they care for the great woods through which they journey on their infernal errands."

"One cannot know, Hugh," observed the anxious mother. "Our dear Robert is in their hands; and, should Mr. Woods be really disposed to go on this mission of mercy, does it comport with our duty as parents to oppose it?"

"A mother is all mother," murmured the captain, who rose from table, kissed his wife's cheek affectionately, and left the room, beckoning to the serjeant to follow.

Captain Willoughby had not been gone many minutes, when the chaplain made his appearance, attired in his surplice, and wearing his best wig; an appliance that all elderly gentlemen in that day fancied necessary to the dignity and gravity of their appearance. Mrs. Willoughby, to own the truth, was delighted. If this excellent woman was ever unjust, it was in behalf of her children; solicitude for whom sometimes induced

her to overlook the rigid construction of the laws of equality.

"We will see which best understands the influence of the sacred office—Captain Willoughby, or myself," observed the chaplain, with a little more importance of manner than it was usual for one so simple to assume. "I do not believe the ministry was instituted to be brow-beaten by tribes of savages, any more than it is to be silenced by the unbeliever or schismatic."

It was very evident that the Rev. Mr. Woods was considerably excited; and this was a condition of mind so unusual with him as to create a species of awe in the observers. As for the two young women, deeply as they were interested in the result, and keenly as Maud, in particular, felt everything which touched the fortunes of Robert Willoughby, neither would presume to interfere, when they saw one, whom they had been taught to reverence from childhood, acting in a way that so little conformed to his ordinary manner. As for Mrs. Willoughby, her own feelings were so much awakened that never had Mr. Woods seemed so evangelical and like a

saint as at that very moment; and it would not have been difficult to persuade her that he was acting under something very like righteous superhuman impulses.

Such, however, was far from being the case. The worthy priest had an exalted idea of his office; and, to fancy it might favourably impress even savages, was little more than carrying out his every-day notions of its authority. He conscientiously believed that he himself, a regularly ordained presbyter, would be more likely to succeed in the undertaking before him than a mere deacon; were a bishop present, he would cheerfully have submitted to his superior claims to sanctity and success. As for archbishops, archdeacons, deans, rural deans, and all the other worldly machinery which has been superadded to the church, the truth compels us to add, that our divine felt no especial reverence, since he considered them as so much clerical surplusage, of very questionable authority, and of doubtful use. He adhered strictly to the orders of divine institution; to these he attached so much weight as to be entirely willing, in his own

person, to demonstrate how little was to be apprehended, when their power was put forth, even against Indians, in humility and faith.

"I shall take this sprig of laurel in my hand, in lieu of the olive-branch," said the excited chaplain, "as the symbol of peace. It is not probable that savages can tell one plant from the other; and, if they could, it will be easy to explain that olives do not grow in America. It is an Eastern tree, ladies, and furnishes the pleasant oil we use on our salads. I carry with me, notwithstanding, the oil which proves a balm to many sorrows; that will be sufficient."

"You will bid them let Robert return to us without delay!" said Mrs. Willoughby earnestly.

"I shall bid them respect God and their consciences. I cannot stop now to rehearse to you the mode of proceeding I shall adopt; but it is all arranged in my own mind. It will be necessary to call the Deity the 'Great Spirit' or 'Manitou,' and to use many poetical images; but this can I do on an emergency. Extem-

pore preaching is far from agreeable to me, in general; nor do I look upon it, in this age of the world, as exactly canonical; nevertheless, it shall be seen I know how to submit even to *that*, when there is a suitable necessity."

It was so seldom Mr. Woods used such magnificent ideas, or assumed a manner in the least distinguishable from one of the utmost simplicity, that his listeners now felt really awed; and when he turned to bless them, as he did with solemnity and affection, the two daughters knelt to receive his benedictions. These delivered, he walked out of the room, crossed the court, and proceeded straightway to the outer gate.

It was, perhaps, fortunate to the design of the Rev. Mr. Woods, that neither the captain nor the serjeant was in the way to arrest it. This the former would certainly have done, out of regard to his friend; and the last, out of regard to "orders." But these military personages were in the library, in deep consultation concerning the next step necessary to take. This left the coast clear, no one belong-

ing to the guard conceiving himself of sufficient authority to stop the chaplain, more especially when he appeared in his wig and surplice. Jamie Allen was a corporal by courtesy; and, at the first summons, he caused the outer gate to be unlocked and unbarred, permitting the chaplain to make his egress, attended by his own respectful bows. This Jamie did, out of reverence to religion generally, though the surplice ever excited his disgust; and, as for the Liturgy, he deemed it to be a species of solemn mockery of worship.

The captain did not re-appear outside of the court until the chaplain, who had made the best of his way towards the rocks, was actually stalking, like a ghost among ruins, through the deserted shantees of the late encampment.

"What in the name of Indian artifice is the white animal that I see moving about on the rocks?" demanded the captain, whose look was first turned in the direction of the camp.

"It seems an Indian wrapped up in a shirt, your honour. As I live, sir, it has a cocked hat on its head!"

"Na—na," interrupted Jamie; "ye'll no be guessing the truth this time without the aid of a little profane revelation. The chiel ye see yan, yer honour, is just Chaplain Woods."

"Woods!—the devil!"

"Na—na—yer honour, it's the reverend gentleman hissel', and no the de'l at a'. He's in his white frock; though why he didn't wear his black gairment is more than I can tell ye: but there he is, walking about amang the Indian dwellings, all the same as if they were so many pews in his ain kirk."

"And how came you to let him pass the gate, against orders?"

"Well, and it is aboot the orders of the priesthood that he so often preaches; and seeing him in the white gairment, and knowing ye've so many fast-days and Christmas' in the kirk o' England, I fancied it might be a bit matter o' prayer he wished to offer up yan, in the house on the flat; and so I e'en thought church prayers better than no prayers at all in such a strait."

As it was useless to complain, the captain was fain to submit, even beginning to hope some good might come of the adventure when he saw Mr. Woods walking unmolested through the deserted camp. The glass was levelled, and the result was watched with intense interest.

The chaplain first explored every shantee, fearlessly and with diligence. Then he descended the rocks, and was lost to view, like those who preceded him. A feverish hour passed, without any symptom of human life appearing in the direction of the mills. Sometimes those who watched fancied they beheld a smoke beginning to steal up over the brow of the rocks, the precursor of the expected conflagration; but a few moments dispersed the apprehension and the fancied smoke together. The day advanced, and yet the Genius of solitude reigned over the mysterious glen. Not a sound emerged from it, not a human form was seen near it, not a sign of a hostile assault or of a friendly return could be detected. All in that direction lay buried in silence, as if the ravine had swallowed its tenants, in imitation of the grave.

CHAPTER IX.

To deck my list by Nature were designed
Such shining expletives of human kind;
Who want, while through blank life they dream along,
Sense to be right, and passion to be wrong.

YOUNG.

THE disappearance of Mr. Woods occasioned no uneasiness at first. An hour elapsed before the captain thought it necessary to relate the occurrence to his family, when a general panic prevailed among the females. Even Maud had hoped the savages would respect the sacred character of the divine, though she knew not why; and here was one of her principal grounds of hope, as connected with Robert Willoughby, slid from beneath her feet.

"What *can* we do, Willoughby?" asked the affectionate mother, almost reduced to despair. "I will go myself in search of my son; they will respect *me*, a woman and a mother."

"You little know the enemy we have to deal with, Wilhelmina, or so rash a thought could not have crossed your mind. We will not be precipitate; a few hours may bring some change to direct us. One thing I learn from Woods' delay. The Indians cannot be far off, and he must be with them, or in their hands; else would he return after having visited the mills and the houses beneath the cliffs."

This sounded probable; and all felt there was a relief in fancying that their friends were still near them, and were not traversing the wilderness as captives.

"I feel less apprehension than any of you," observed Beulah in her placid manner. "If Bob is in the hands of an American party, the brother-in-law of Evert Beekman cannot come to much harm; with British Indians he will be respected for his own sake, as soon as he can make himself known."

"I have thought of all this, my child," answered the father, musing, "and there is reason in it. It will be difficult, however, for Bob to make his real character certain, in his present

circumstances. He does not appear the man he is; and, should there even be a white among his captors who can read, he has not a paper with him to sustain his word."

"But he promised me faithfully to use Evert's name, did he ever fall into American hands," resumed Beulah earnestly; "and Evert has said, again and again, that *my* brother could never be his enemy."

"Heaven help us all, dear child!" answered the captain, kissing his daughter. "It is, indeed, a cruel war, when such aids are to be called in for our protection. We will endeavour to be cheerful, notwithstanding; for we know of nothing yet that ought to alarm us out of reason; all may come right before the sun set."

The captain looked at his family, and endeavoured to smile; but he met no answering gleam of happiness on either face, nor was his own effort very successful. As for his wife, she was never known to be aught but miserable while any she loved were in doubtful safety. She lived entirely out of herself, and altogether for her husband, children, and friends; a woman less selfish,

or one more devoted to the affections, never existing. Then Beulah, with all her reliance on the magic of Evert's name, and with the deep feelings that had been awakened within her as a wife and a mother, still loved her brother as tenderly as ever. As for Maud, the agony she endured was increased by her efforts to keep it from breaking out in some paroxysm that might betray her secret; and her features were getting an expression of stern resolution, which, blended with her beauty, gave them a grandeur her father had never before seen in her bright countenance.

"This child suffers on Bob's account more than any of us," observed the captain, drawing his pet towards him, placing her kindly on his knee, and folding her to his bosom. "She has no husband yet, to divide her heart; all her love centres in her brother."

The look which Beulah cast upon her father was not reproachful, for that was an expression she would not have indulged with him, but it was one in which pain and mortification were so obvious as to induce the mother to receive her into her own arms.

"Hugh, you are unjust to Beulah," said the anxious mother; "nothing can ever cause this dear girl either to forget to feel for any of us."

The captain's ready explanation, and affectionate kiss, brought a smile again to Beulah's face, though it shone amid tears. All was, however, immediately forgotten; for the parties understood each other, and Maud profited by the scene to escape from the room. This flight broke up the conference; and the captain, after exhorting his wife and daughter to set an example of fortitude to the rest of the females, left the house, to look after his duties among the men.

The absence of Joel cast a shade of doubt over the minds of the disaffected. These last were comparatively numerous, comprising most of the native Americans in the Hut, the blacks and Joyce excepted. Strides had been enabled to effect his purposes more easily with his own countrymen, by working on their good qualities, as well as on their bad. Many of these men—most of them, indeed—meant well; but their attachment to the cause of their native land laid them open to assaults, against which Mike and

Jamie Allen were insensible. Captain Willoughby was an Englishman, in the first place; he was an old army-officer, in the next; and he had an only son who was confessedly in open arms against the independence of America. It is easy to see how a demagogue like Joel, who had free access to the ears of his comrades, could improve circumstances like these to his own particular objects. Nevertheless, he had difficulties to contend with. If it were true that Parson Woods still insisted on praying for the king, it was known that the captain laughed at him for his reverence for Cæsar; if Robert Willoughby were a major in the royal forces, Evert Beekman was a colonel in the continentals; if the owner of the manor were born in England, his wife and children were born in America; and he himself was often heard to express his convictions of the justice of most of that for which the provincials were contending—*all*, the worthy captain had not yet made up his mind to concede to them.

Then, most of the Americans in the Hut entertained none of the selfish and narrow views of Joel and the miller. Their wish was to do right,

in the main; and, though obnoxious to the charge of entertaining certain prejudices that rendered them peculiarly liable to become the dupes of a demagogue, they submitted to many of the better impulses, and were indisposed to be guilty of any act of downright injustice. The perfect integrity with which they had ever been treated, too, had its influence: nor was the habitual kindness of Mrs. Willoughby to their wives and children forgotten; nor the gentleness of Beulah, or the beauty, spirit, and generous impulses of Maud. In a word, the captain, when he went forth to review his men, who were now all assembled under arms within the palisades for that purpose, went to meet a wavering, rather than a positively disaffected or rebellious body.

"Attention!" cried Joyce, as his commanding officer came in front of a line which contained men of different colours, statures, ages, dresses, countries, habits, and physiognomies, making it a sort of epitome of the population of the whole colony as it existed in that day; "Attention! Present arms!"

The captain pulled off his hat complacently,

in return to this salute, though he was obliged to smile at the array which met his eyes. Every one of the Dutchmen had got his musket to an order, following a sort of fugleman of their own; while Mike had invented a "motion" that would have puzzled any one but himself to account for. The butt of the piece was projected towards the the captain, quite out of line, while the barrel rested on his own shoulder. Still, as his arms were extended to the utmost, the County-Leitrim man fancied he was performing much better than common. Jamie had correct notions of the perpendicular, from having used the plumb-bob so much, though even he made the trifling mistake of presenting arms with the lock outwards. As for the Yankees, they were all tolerably exact in everything but time and the line; bringing their pieces down, one after another, much as they were in the practice of following their leaders in matters of opinion. The negroes defied description; nor was it surprising they failed, each of them thrusting his head forward to see how the "motions" looked, in a way that prevented any particular attention to his own part of

the duty. The serjeant had the good sense to see that his drill had not yet produced perfection, and he brought his men to a shoulder again as soon as possible. In this he succeeded perfectly, with the exception that just half of the arms were brought to the right, and the other half to the left shoulders.

"We shall do better, your honour, as we get a little more drill," said Joyce, with an apologetic salute. "Corporal Strides has a tolerable idea of the manual, and he usually acts as our fugleman. When he gets back, we shall improve."

"When he gets back, serjeant!—can you, or any other man, tell when that will be?"

"Yes, yer honour," sputtered Mike, with the eagerness of a boy. "I 'se the man to tell yees that same."

"*You?*—What can *you* know that is not known to all of us, my good Michael?"

"I knows what I sees; and if yon isn't Misther Sthrides, then I am not acquainted with his sthraddle."

Sure enough, Joel appeared at the gate as Mike concluded his assertions. How he got

there no one knew, for a good look-out had been kept in the direction of the mill; and yet here was the overseer applying for admission, as if he had fallen from the clouds! Of course, the application was not denied, though made in a manner so unexpected; and Joel stood in front of his old comrades at the hoe and plough, if not in arms, in less than a minute. His return was proclaimed through the house in an incredibly short space of time by the aid of the children; and all the females came pouring out from the court to learn the tidings, led by Mrs. Strides and her young brood.

"Have you anything to communicate to me in private, Strides?" the captain demanded, maintaining an appearance of *sang-froid* that he was far from feeling; "or can your report be made here before the whole settlement?"

"It's just as the captain pleases," answered the wily demagogue; "though, to my notion, the people have a right to know all, in an affair that touches the common interest."

"Attention! men," cried the serjeant.—"By platoons, to the right—"

"No matter, Joyce," interrupted the captain, waving his hand; "let the men remain. You have held communications with our visitors, I know, Strides?"

"We have, Captain Willoughby, and a desperate sort of visitors be they! A more ugly set of Mohawks and Onondages I never laid eyes on."

"As for their appearance, it is matter of indifference to me.—What is the object of their visit?"

"I mean, ugly behaved, and they deserve all I say of 'em. Their ar'nd, according to their own tell, is to seize the captain and his family, in behalf of the colonies."

As Joel uttered this he cast a glance along the line of faces paraded before him, in order to read the effect it might produce. That it was not lost on some was as evident as that it was on others. The captain, however, appeared unmoved, and there was a slight air of incredulity in the smile that curled his lip.

"This, then, you report as being the business of the party in coming to this place," he said quietly.

"I do, sir; and an ugly ar'nd it is, in times like these."

"Is there any person in authority in a party that pretends to move about the colony with such high duties?"

"There 's one or two white men among 'em, if that 's what the captain means; they pretend to be duly authorized and app'inted to act in behalf of the people."

At each allusion to the people Joel invariably looked towards his particular partisans, in order to note the effect the use of the word might produce. On the present occasion he even ventured to wink at the miller.

"If acting on authority, why do they keep aloof? I have no such character for resisting the laws, that any who come clothed with its mantle need fear resistance."

"Why, I s'pose they reason in some such manner as this. There 's *two* laws in operation at this time; the king's law, and the people's law. I take it, this party comes in virtue of the people's law; whereas it is likely the law the captain means is the king's law. The dif-

ference is so great, that one or t'other carries the day, just as the king's friends or the people's friends happen to be the strongest. These men don't like to trust to *their* law, when the captain may think it safest to trust a little to his'n."

"And all this was told you, Strides, in order to be repeated to me?"

"Not a word on 't; it 's all my own consait about the matter. Little passed between us."

"And now," said the captain, relieving his breast by a long sigh, "I presume I may inquire about your companion. You probably have ascertained who he is?"

"Lord, Captain Willoughby, I was altogether dumbfounded when the truth came upon me of a sudden! I never should have known the major in that dress, in the world, or out of the world either; but he walks so like the captain, that, as I followed a'ter him, I said to myself, who *can* it be? and then the walk came over me, as it might be; and then I remembered last night, and the stranger that was out with the captain, and how he occupied the room next to the library, and them things: and so,

when I come to look in his face, there was the major sure enough !"

Joel lied famously in this account; but he believed himself safe, as no one could very well contradict him.

"Now you have explained the manner in which you recognised my son, Strides," added the captain, "I will thank you to let me know what has become of him ?"

"He 's with the savages. Having come so far to seize the father, it wasn't in natur' to let the son go free, when he walked right into the lion's den, like."

"And how could the savages know he *was* my son ? Did they, too, recognise the family walk ?"

Strides was taken aback at this question, and he even had the grace to colour a little. He saw that he was critically placed ; for, in addition to the suggestions of conscience, he understood the captain sufficiently to know he was a man who would not trifle, in the event of his suspicions becoming active. He knew he deserved the gallows; and Joyce was a man who would

execute him in an instant, did his commander order it. The idea fairly made the traitor tremble in his shoes.

"Ah! I've got a little ahead of my story," he said hastily. "But perhaps I had best tell everything as it happened."

"That will be the simplest and clearest course. In order that there be no interruption, we will go into my room, where Joyce will follow us as soon as he has dismissed his men."

This was done; and in a minute or two the captain and Joel were seated in the library, Joyce respectfully standing,—the old soldier always declining to assume any familiarity with his superior. We shall give the substance of most of Joel's report in our own language; preferring it, defective as it is, to that of the overseer's, which was no bad representative of his cunning, treacherous, and low mind.

It seems, then, that the bearers of the flag were amicably received by the Indians. The men towards whom they were led on the rocks were the chiefs of the party, who treated them with proper respect. The sudden movement

was explained to them, as connected with their meal; and the chiefs, accompanied by the major and Strides, proceeded to the house of the miller. Here, by means of a white man for an interpreter, the major had demanded the motive of the strangers in coming into the settlement. The answer was a frank demand for the surrender of the Hut, and all it contained, to the authorities of the continental congress. The major had endeavoured to persuade a white man, who professed to hold the legal authority for what was doing, of the perfectly neutral disposition of his father; when, according to Joel's account, to his own great astonishment, the argument was met by the announcement of Robert Willoughby's true character, and a sneering demand if it were likely a man who had a son in the royal army, and who had kept that son secreted in his own house, would be very indifferent to the success of the royal cause.

"They've got a wonderful smart man there for a magistrate, I can tell you," added Joel with emphasis; "and he raally bore as hard on the major as a lawyer before a court. How

he found out that the major was at the Hut is a little strange, seein' that none of us know'd of it; but they 've got extraor'nary means now-a-days."

"And did Major Willoughby admit his true character, when charged with being in the king's service?"

"He did — and like a gentleman. He only insisted that his sole ar'nd out here was to see his folks, and that he intended to go back to York the moment he had paid his visit."

"How did the person you mention receive his explanations?"

"Waal, to own the truth, he laugh'd at it, like all natur'. I don't believe they put any great weight on a syllable the major told 'em. I never see critturs with such onbelievin' faces! After talking as long as suited themselves, they ordered the major to be shut up in a buttery, with a warrior at the door for a sentinel; a'ter which they took to examining me."

Joel then proceeded with an account — his own account, always, be it remembered — of what passed between himself and the strangers. They

had questioned him closely touching the nature of the defences of the Hut, the strength of the garrison, its disposition, the number and quality of the arms, and the amount of the ammunition.

"You may depend on't, I gave a good account," continued the overseer in a self-satisfied way. "In the first place, I told 'em the captain had a lieutenant with him that had sarved out the whull French war; then I put the men up to fifty at once, seein' it was just as easy to say that, as thirty or thirty-three. As to the arms, I told 'em more than half the pieces were double-barrelled; and that the captain, in particular, carried a rifle that had killed nine savages in one fight."

"You were much mistaken in that, Joel. It is true that a celebrated chief once fell by this rifle; even that is not a matter for boasting."

"Waal, them that told me on't said that *two* had fallen before it, and I put it up to nine at once, to make a good story better. Nine men had a more desperate sound than two; and,

when you *do* begin to brag, a man shouldn't be backward. I thought, hows'ever, that they was most nonplussed when I told 'em of the field-piece."

"The field-piece, Strides!—Why did you venture on an exaggeration that any forward movement of theirs must expose?"

"We'll see to that, captain; we'll see to that. Field-pieces are desperate dampers to Indian courage; so, I thought I 'd just let 'em have a six-pounder, by way of tryin' their natur's. They looked like men goin' to execution when I told 'em of the cannon, and what a history it had gone through."

"And what may have been this history, pray?"

"I just told 'em it was the very gun the captain had took from the French, about which we've all heern tell; and that, as everybody knows, was a desperate piece, havin' killed more than a hundred reg'lars before the captain charged baggonet on it and carried it off."

This was a very artful speech, since it alluded to the most distinguished exploit of Captain

Willoughby's military life; one of which it would have been more than human had he not been a little proud. All who knew him had heard of this adventure, and Joel cunningly turned it to account in the manner seen. The allusion served to put to sleep, for the moment at least, certain very unpleasant suspicions that were getting to be active in his superior's mind.

"There was no necessity, Strides, for saying anything about that affair," the captain modestly interposed. "It happened a long time since, and might well be forgotten. Then, you know, we have no gun to support your account; when our deficiency is ascertained, it will all be set down to the true cause—a wish to conceal our real weakness."

"I beg your honour's pardon," put in Joyce; "I think Strides has acted in a military manner in this affair. It is according to the art of war for the besieged to pretend to be stronger than they are; and even besiegers sometimes put a better face than the truth will warrant on their strength. Military accounts, as your honour well

knows, never pass exactly for Gospel, unless it be with the raw hands."

"Then," added Joel, "I knowed what I was about, seein' that we had a cannon ready for use, as soon as it could be mounted."

"I think I understand Strides, your honour," resumed the serjeant. "I have carved a 'quaker,' as an ornament for the gateway, intending to saw it in two in the middle, and place the pieces crosswise over the entrance, as your honour has often seen such things in garrisons — like the brass ornaments on the artillery caps, I mean, your honour. Well, this gun is finished and painted, and I intended to split it, and have it up this very week. I suppose Joel has had it in his mind, quaker fashion."

"The serjeant's right. That piece looks as much like a raal cannon as one of our catechisms is like another. The muzzle is more than a foot deep, and has a plaguy gunpowder look!"

"But this gun is not mounted; even if it were, it could only be set up for show," observed the captain.

"Put that cannon up once, and I'll answer for it that no Injin faces it. 'Twill be as good

as a dozen sentinels," answered Joel. "As for mountin', I thought of that before I said a syllable about the crittur. There's the new truck wheels in the court all ready to hold it, and the carpenters can put the hinder part to the whull in an hour or two, and that in a way no Injin could tell the difference between it and a raal cannon at ten yards."

"This is plausible, your honour," said Joyce respectfully, "and it shows that Corporal Strides," —Joel insisted he was a serjeant, but the real Simon Pure never gave him a title higher than that of corporal,—"and it shows that Corporal Strides has an idea of war. By mounting that piece, and using it with discretion, — refusing it at the right moment, and showing it at another— a great deal might be done with it, either in a siege or an assault. If your honour will excuse the liberty, I would respectfully suggest that it might be well to set the quaker on his legs, and plant him at the gate as an exhorter."

The captain reflected a moment, and then desired the overseer to proceed in his account. The rest of Joel's story was soon told. He had

mystified the strangers, according to his own account of the matter, so thoroughly, by affecting to withhold nothing, that they considered him as a sort of ally, and did not put him in confinement at all. It is true, he was placed *en surveillance ;* but the duty was so carelessly performed, that, at the right moment, he had passed down the ravine, a direction in which a movement was not expected, and buried himself in the woods so very effectually that it would have baffled pursuit, had any been attempted. After making a very long *détour*, that consumed hours, he turned the entire valley, and actually reached the Hut, under the cover of the rivulet and its bushes, or precisely by the route in which he and Mike had gone forth in quest of Maud on the evening of the major's arrival. This latter fact, however, Joel had reasons of his own for concealing.

"You have told us nothing of Mr. Woods, Strides," the captain observed, when Joel's account was ended.

"Mr. Woods ! I can tell the captain nothing of that gentleman ; I supposed he was here."

The manner in which the chaplain had left the

Hut, and his disappearance in the ravine, were then explained to the overseer, who evidently had quitted the mill, on his return, before the divine performed his exploit. There was a sinister expression in Joel's eyes, as he heard the account, that might have given the alarm to men more suspicious than the two old soldiers; but he had the address to conceal all he felt or thought.

"If Mr. Woods has gone into the hands of the Injins in his church shirt," rejoined the overseer, "his case is hopeless, so far as captivity is consarned. One of the charges 'ág'in the captain is, that the chaplain he keeps prays as regulairly for the king as he used to do when it was lawful and agreeable to public feelin'."

"This you heard while under examination before the magistrate you have named?" demanded the captain.

"As good as that, and something more to the same p'int. The 'squire complained awfully of a minister's prayin' for the king and r'yal family when the country was fightin' 'em."

"In that, the Rev. Mr. Woods only obeys orders," said the serjeant.

"But they say not. The orders is gone out now, *they* pretend, for no man to pray for any on 'em."

"Ay, orders from the magistrates, perhaps. But the Rev. Mr. Woods is a divine, and has his own superiors in the church, and *they* must issue the commands that he obeys. I dare to say, your honour, if the archbishop of Canterbury, or the commander-in-chief of the church, whoever he may be, should issue a general order directing all the parsons not to pray for King George, the Rev. Mr. Woods would have no scruple about obeying. But it 's a different thing when a justice of the peace undertakes to stand fugleman for the clergy. It 's like a navy captain undertaking to wheel a regiment."

"Poor Woods!" exclaimed the captain; "had he been ruled by me, he would have dropped those prayers, and it would have been better for us both. But he is of your opinion, serjeant, and thinks that a layman can have no authority over a gownsman."

"And isn't he right, your honour? Think what a mess of it the militia officers make, when

they undertake to meddle with a regular corps. Some of our greatest difficulties in the last war came from such awkward hands attempting to manage machines of which they had no just notions. As for praying, your honour, I 'm no wise particular *who* I pray for, or *what* I pray for, so long as it be all set down in general orders that come from the right head-quarters; and I think the Rev. Mr. Woods ought to be judged by the same rule."

As the captain saw no use in prolonging the dialogue, he dismissed his companions. He then sought his wife, in order to make her acquainted with the actual state of things. This last was a painful duty, though Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters heard the truth with less of apprehension than the husband and father had anticipated. They had suffered so much from uncertainty, that there was a relief in learning the truth. The mother did not think the authorities of the colony would hurt her son, whom she fancied all men must, in a degree, love as she loved. Beulah thought of her own husband as Bob's safeguard; while Maud felt it to be

comparative happiness to know he was unharmed, and still so near her.

This unpleasant duty discharged, the captain began to bethink him seriously of his military trust. After some reflection, and listening to a few more suggestions from Joyce, he consented to let the "quaker" be put on wheels. The carpenters were immediately set at work to achieve this job, which the serjeant volunteered to superintend in person. As for Joel, his wife and children, with the miller, occupied most of the morning; the day turning, and even drawing towards its close, ere he became visible, as had formerly been his wont, among the men of the settlement.

All this time everything without the palisades lay in the silence of nature. The sun cast its glories athwart the lovely scene, as in one of the Sabbaths of the woods; but man was nowhere visible. Not a hostile Indian, or white, exhibited himself; and the captain began to suspect that, satisfied with their captures, the party had commenced its return towards the river, postponing his own arrest for some other

occasion. So strong did this impression become towards the close of the day, that he was actually engaged in writing to some friends of influence in Albany and on the Mohawk to interpose their names and characters in his son's behalf, when the serjeant, about nine o'clock, the hour when he had been ordered to parade the guard for the first half of the night, presented himself at the door of his room to make an important report.

"What now, Joyce?" demanded the captain. "Are any of our fellows sleepy, and plead illness?"

"Worse than that, your honour, I greatly fear," was the answer. "Of the ten men your honour commanded me to detail for the guard, five are missing. I set them down as deserters."

"Deserters! This is serious, indeed; let the signal be made for a general parade—the people cannot yet have gone to bed: we will look into this."

As Joyce made it a matter of religion "to obey orders," this command was immediately put

into execution. In five minutes a messenger came to summon the captain to the court, where the garrison was under arms. The serjeant stood in front of the little party with a lantern, holding his muster-roll in his hand. The first glance told the captain that a serious reduction had taken place in his forces, and he led the serjeant aside to hear his report.

"What is the result of your inquiries, Joyce?" he demanded, with more uneasiness than he would have liked to betray openly.

"We have lost just half our men, sir. The miller, most of the Yankees, and two of the Dutchmen are not on parade; neither is one of them to be found in his quarters. They have either gone over to the enemy, Captain Willoughby, or, disliking the appearance of things here, they have taken to the woods for safety."

"And abandoned their wives and children, serjeant? Men would scarcely do that."

"Their wives and children have deserted too, sir. Not a chick or child belonging to either of the runaways is to be found in the Hut."

CHAPTER X.

> For all the Welshmen, hearing thou wert dead,
> Are gone to Bolingbroke, dispersed and fled.
>
> *Richard II.*

This was startling intelligence to receive just as night had shut in, and under the other circumstances of the case. Touching the men who still remained, Captain Willoughby conceived it prudent to inquire into their characters and names, in order to ascertain the ground he stood on, and to govern his future course accordingly. He put the question to the serjeant, therefore, as soon as he could lead him far enough from the little array to be certain he was out of ear-shot.

"We have Michael O'Hearn, Jamie Allen, the two carpenters, the three niggers, Joel, and the three Dutchmen that last came into the set-

tlement, and the two lads that Strides engaged at the beginning of the year, left," was the answer. "These, counting your honour and myself, make just fifteen men; quite enough yet, I should think, to make good the house in case of an assault; though I fear everything like an outwork must be abandoned."

"On the whole, these are the best of our men," returned the captain; "I mean the most trustworthy. I count on Mike, Jamie, and the blacks as being as much to be relied on as we are ourselves. Joel, too, is a man of resources, if he will but do his duty under fire."

"Corporal Strides is still an untried soldier, your honour; though recruits, even, sometimes do wonders. Of course, I shall reduce the guard to half its former strength, as the men must have some sleep, sir."

"We must depend very much on your vigilance and mine to-night, Joyce. You shall take the guard till one, when I will stand it for the rest of the night. I will speak to the men before you dismiss them. An encouraging word just now may be worth a platoon to us."

The serjeant seldom dissented from any suggestion of his commanding officer, and the scheme was carried out on the spot. The lantern was so placed as to permit the captain to see the heterogeneous row of countenances that was drawn up before him, and he proceeded :

" It seems, my friends," he said, " that some of our people have been seized with a panic, and have deserted. These mistaken men have not only fled themselves, but they have induced their wives and children to follow them. A little reflection will show you to what distress all must be reduced by this ill-judged flight. Fifty miles from another settlement of any size, and more than thirty from even a single hut, beyond the cabin of a hunter, days must pass before they can reach a place of safety, even should they escape the savage foe that we know to be scouring the woods. The women and children will not have sufficient art to conceal their trail, nor sufficient strength to hold out against hunger and fatigue many hours. God forgive them for what they have done, and guide them through the difficulties and pains by which they are

menaced! As for us, we must determine to do our whole duty, or at once to retire, with the consent of each other. If there is a man among you, then, who apprehends the consequences of standing to his arms, and of defending this house, let him confess it frankly; he shall have leave to depart, with all that belongs to him, taking food and the means of subsistence and defence with him. I wish no man to remain with me and mine, but he who can do it cheerfully. The night is now dark, and, by quitting the Hut at an early hour, such a start might be gained over any pursuers as to place him in comparative security before morning. If any such man is here, let him now speak out honestly, and fear nothing. The gate shall be opened for his march."

The captain paused, but not a soul answered. A common sentiment of loyalty seemed to bind every one of the listeners to his duty. The dark eyes of the negroes rolled along the short rank to see who would be the first to desert their master, and grins of delight showed the satisfaction with which they noted the effect of the ap-

peal. As for Mike, he felt too strongly to keep silence, and he muttered the passing impressions aloud.

"Och!" growled the County-Leitrim man, "is it a good journey that I wish the runaways? That it isn't, nor many a good male either, as they trudge alang t'rough the woods, with their own consciences forenent their eyes, pricking them up to come back, like so many t'ieves of the wor-r-ld as they are, every mother's son of 'em, women and all. I 'd nivir do *that;* no, not if my head was *all* scalp, down to the soles of my fut, and an Injin was at every inch of it, to cut out his summer clothes of my own skin. Talk of religion amang sich cr'athures! Why, there isn't enough moral in one of thim to carry him through the shortest prayer the Lord allows a Christian to utter. Divil burn 'em, say I, and that 's my kindest wish in their behalf."

The captain waited patiently for this soliloquy to terminate; then he dismissed the men with a few more words of encouragement, and his thanks for the fidelity they at least had shown. By this time the night had got to be dark, and the court

was much more so, on account of the shadows of the buildings, than places in the open air. As the captain turned aside to give his last instructions to Joyce, he discovered, by the light of the lantern the latter held, a figure standing at no great distance, quite dimly seen on account of its proximity to the walls of the Hut. It was clearly a man; and as all the males able to bear arms, a single sentinel outside the court excepted, were supposed to be in the group that had not yet separated, the necessity of ascertaining the character of this unlooked-for visitor flashed on the minds of both the old soldiers at the same instant. Joyce raised the lantern as they moved quickly towards the motionless form; and its light glanced athwart a pair of wild, glowing, dark eyes, and the red visage of an Indian.

"Nick!" exclaimed the captain, "is that you? What has brought you here again, and how have you entered the palisades? Do you come as a friend, to aid us, or as an enemy?"

"Too much question, cap'in—too much like

squaw;—ask all togeder. Go to book-room; Nick follow; tell all he got to say."

The captain whispered the serjeant to ascertain whether the watch without was vigilant; when he led the way to the library, where, as he expected, he found his wife and daughters anxiously waiting his appearance.

"Oh! Hugh, I trust it is not as bad as we feared!" cried the mother, as the captain entered the room, closely attended by the Tuscarora: "our men cannot be so heartless as to desert us at such a moment!"

The captain kissed his wife, said a word or two of encouragement, and pointed to the Indian.

"Nick!" exclaimed all three of the females in a breath, though the tones of their voices denoted very different sensations, at the unexpected appearance of their old acquaintance. Mrs. Willoughby's exclamation was not without pleasure, for *she* thought the man her friend; Beulah's was filled with alarm, little Evert and savage massacres suddenly crossing the sensitive mind of the young mother; while Maud's tone

had much of the stern resolution that she had summoned to sustain her in a moment of such fearful trial.

"Yes, Nick—Sassy Nick," repeated the Indian in his guttural voice.—"Ole friend, you no glad see him?"

"That will depend on your errand," interposed the captain. "Are you one of the party that is now lying at the mill?—But, stop; how did you get within the palisades? First answer me *that*."

"Come in. Tree no good to stop Injin. Can't do it wid branches, how do it widout? Want plenty of musket and plenty of soldier to do *dat*. Dis no garrison, cap'in, to make Nick afeard. Always tell him too much hole to be tight."

"This is not answering my question, fellow. By what means did you pass the palisades?"

"What means?—Injin means, sartain. Came like cat, jump like deer, slide like snake. Nick great Tuscarora chief; know well how warrior march when he dig up hatchet."

"And Nick has been a great hanger-on of

garrisons, and should know the use that I can make of his back. You will remember, Tuscarora, that I have had you flogged more than once in my day."

This was said menacingly, and with more warmth, perhaps, than was prudent. It caused the listeners to start, as if a sudden and new danger rose before their eyes; and the anxious looks he encountered warned the captain that he was probably going too far. As for Nick himself, the gathering thunder-cloud is not darker than his visage became at the words he heard: it seemed, by the moral writhing of his spirit, as if every disgracing blow he had received was at that instant torturing his flesh anew, blended with the keenest feelings of ignominy. Captain Willoughby was startled at the effect he had produced, but it was too late to change his course; and he remained in dignified quiet, awaiting the workings of the Tuscarora's mind.

It was more than a minute ere Nick made any reply. Gradually, but very slowly, the expression of his visage changed. It finally became as stoical in expression as severe training could

render the human countenance, and as unmoved as marble. Then he found the language he wanted.

"Listen," said the Indian sternly. "Cap'in ole man. Got a head like snow on rock. He bold soldier; but he no got wisdom enough for gray hair. Why he put he hand rough on place where whip strike? Wise man nebber do *dat*. Last winter he cold; fire wanted to make him warm. Much ice, much storm, much snow. World seem bad—fit only for bear, and snake, dat hide in rock. Well; winter gone away; ice gone away; snow gone away; storm gone away. Summer come in his place. Ebbery t'ing *good;* ebbery t'ing *pleasant*. Why t'ink of winter, when summer come, and drive him away wid pleasant sky?"

"In order to provide for its return. He who never thought of the evil day, in the hour of his prosperity, would find that he has forgotten, not only a duty, but the course of wisdom."

"He *not* wise!" said Nick sternly. "Cap'in pale-face chief. He got garrison; got soldier; got musket. Well, he flog warrior's back; make

blood come. Dat bad enough; worse to put finger on ole sore, and make 'e pain, and 'e shame, come back ag'in."

"Perhaps it would have been more generous, Nick, to have said nothing about it; but you see how I am situated: an enemy without; my men deserting; a bad look-out; and one finding his way into my very court-yard, and I ignorant of the means."

"Nick tell cap'in all about means. If red-men outside, shoot *'em;* if garrison run away, flog garrison; if don't know, l'arn; but don't flog back ag'in on ole sore!"

"Well, well, say no more about it, Nick. Here is a dollar to keep you in rum, and we will talk of other matters."

Nick heeded not the money, though it was held before his eyes some little time to tempt him. Perceiving that the Tuscarora was now acting as a warrior and a chief, which Nick would do, and do well, on occasion, the captain pocketed the offering, and regulated his own course accordingly.

"At all events, I have a right to insist on

knowing, first, by what means you entered the palisades; and, second, what business has brought you here, at night, and so suddenly."

"Ask Nick, cap'in, all he right to ask; but don't touch old flog. How I cross palisade? Where your sentinel to stop Injin? One at gate; well, none all round t'other place. Get in, up here, down dere, over yonder. Ten, twenty, t'ree spot. S'pose him tree? climb him. S'pose him palisade? climb him, too. What help?—soldier out at gate, when Nick get over t'other end! Come in court, too, when he want. Half gate, half no gate. So easy, 'shamed to brag of. Cap'in once Nick's friend—went on same war-path: dat in ole time. Both warrior; both went ag'in French garrison. Well; who crept in, close by cannon, open gate, let pale-men in? Great Tuscarora do *dat:* no flog *den;* no talk of ole sore dat night!"

"This is all true enough, Wyandotté."—This was Nick's loftiest appellation; and a grim but faint smile crossed his visage as he heard it again in the mouth of one who had known him when its sound carried terror to the hearts of his

enemies.—"This is all true, Wyandotté, and I have ever given you credit for it. On that occasion you were bold as the lion, and as cunning as a fox. You were much honoured for that exploit."

"No ole sore in *dat*, um?" cried Nick, in a way so startling as to sicken Mrs. Willoughby to the heart. "No call Nick dog dat night. He *all* warrior den—all face;—no *back*."

"I have said you were honoured for your conduct, Nick, and paid for it. Now, let me know what has brought you here to-night, and whence you come."

There was another pause. Gradually the countenance of the Indian became less and less fierce, until it lost its expression of malignant resentment in one in which human emotions of a kinder nature predominated.

"Squaw good," he said, even gently, waving his hand towards Mrs. Willoughby.—"Got son; love him like little baby. Nick come six, two time before, runner from her son."

"My son, Wyandotté!" exclaimed the mo-

ther. "Bring you any tidings now from my boy?"

"No bring tidin'—too heavy; Indian don't love to carry load;—bring *letter*."

The cry from the three females was now common, each holding out her hand with an involuntary impulse to receive the note. Nick drew the missive from a fold of his garment, and placed it in the hand of Mrs. Willoughby with a quiet grace that a courtier might have wished to equal in vain.

The note was short, and had been written in pencil on a leaf torn from some book of coarse paper. The hand-writing, however, was at once recognised as Robert Willoughby's, though there was no address nor any signature. The paper merely contained the following:

"Trust to your defences, and to nothing else. This party has many white men in it disguised as Indians. I am suspected, if not known. You will be tampered with, but the wisest course is to be firm. If Nick is honest, he can tell you more; if false, this note will be shown, even

though it be delivered. Secure the inner gates, and depend more on the house itself than on the palisades. Fear nothing for me,—my life can be in no danger."

This note was read by each in succession, Maud turning aside to conceal the tears that fell fast on the paper as she perused it. She read it last, and was enabled to retain it; and precious to her heart was the boon at such a moment, when nearly every sensation of her being centred in intense feeling in behalf of the captive.

"We are told to inquire the particulars of you, Nick," observed the captain; "I hope you will tell us nothing but truth. A lie is so unworthy a warrior's mouth!"

"Nick didn't lie 'bout beaver dam! Cap'in no find him good, as Indian say?"

"In that you dealt honestly, and I give you credit for it. Has any one seen this letter but ourselves, yourself, and the person who wrote it?"

"What for ask? If Nick say no, cap'in t'ink he lie. Even fox tell trut' some time;—why not Injin? Nick say NO."

"Where did you leave my son, and when?—Where is the party of red-skins at this moment?"

"All pale-face in hurry! Ask ten, one, four question altogeder. Well, answer him so. Down here, at mill; down dere, at mill; half an hour, six, two, ten o'clock."

"I understand you to say that Major Willoughby was at the mill when you saw him last, and that this was only half an hour since?"

The Tuscarora nodded his head in assent, but made no other reply. Even as he did this his keen eyes rolled over the pallid faces of the females in a way to awaken the captain's distrust, and he resumed his questions in a tone that partook more of the military severity of his ancient habits than of the gentler manner he had been accustomed to use of late years.

"You know me, Nick," he said sternly, "and ought to dread my displeasure."

"What cap'in mean now?" demanded the Indian quietly.

"That the same whip is in this fort that I always kept in the other, in which you knew me to dwell; nor have I forgotten how to use it."

The Tuscarora gazed at the captain with a very puzzling expression, though, in the main, his countenance appeared to be ironical rather than fierce.

"What for talk of whip now?" he said. "Even Yengeese gen'ral hide whip when he see enemy. Soldier can't fight when back sore. When battle near, den all good friend; when battle over, den flog, flog, flog. Why talk so?—Cap'in nebber strike *Wyandotté*."

"Your memory must be short, to say this! I thought an Indian kept a better record of what passed."

"No man *dare* strike Wyandotté!" exclaimed the Indian with energy. "No man—pale-face or red-skin—*can* give blow on back of Wyandotté, and see sunset!"

"Well, well, Nick; we will not dispute on this point, but let by-gones be by-gones. What *has* happened, *has* happened, and I hope will never occur again."

"Dat happen to Nick, Sassy Nick,—poor, drunken Nick;—to Wyandotté, nebber!"

"I believe I begin to understand you now,

Tuscarora, and am glad I have a chief and a warrior in my house, instead of a poor miserable outcast. Shall I have the pleasure of filling you a glass in honour of our old campaigns?"

"Nick alway dry — Wyandotté know no thirst. Nick, beggar — ask for rum — *pray* for rum — *t'ink* of rum, *talk* of rum, *laugh* for rum, *cry* for rum. — Wyandotté don't know rum, when he see him. Wyandotté beg not'in'; no, not his scalp."

"All this sounds well, and I am both willing and glad, chief, to receive you in the character in which you give me to understand you have now come. A warrior of Wyandotté's high name is too proud to carry a forked tongue in his mouth, and I shall hear nothing but truth. Tell me, then, all you know about this party at the mill; what has brought it here, how you came to meet my son, and what will be the next step of his captors. Answer the questions in the order in which I put them."

"Wyandotté not newspaper to tell ebbery

t'ing at once. Let cap'in talk like one chief speaking to anoder."

"Then, tell me first what you know of this party at the mill. Are there many pale-faces in it?"

"Put 'em in the river," answered the Indian sententiously; "water tell the trut'."

"You think that there are many among them that would wash white?"

"Wyandotté *know* so. When did red warriors ever travel on their path like hogs in drove? *One* red-man there, as Great Spirit make him; by his side *two* red-men, as *paint* make 'em. This soon told on trail."

"You struck their trail, then, and joined their company in that manner?"

Another nod indicated the assent of the Indian. Perceiving that the Tuscarora did not intend to speak, the captain continued his interrogatories.

"And how did the trail betray this secret, chief?" he asked.

"Toe turn out — step too short — trail too broad — trail too plain — march too short."

"You must have followed them some distance, Wyandotté, to learn all this?"

"Follow from Mohawk — join 'em at mill. Tuscarora don't like too much travel with Mohawk."

"But, according to your account, there cannot be a great many red-skins in the party, if the white men so much out-number them."

Nick now raised his right hand, showing all the fingers and the thumb at each exhibition four several times. Then he raised it once, showing only the fore-finger and thumb.

"This makes twenty-two, Nick. Do you include yourself in the number?"

"Wyandotté a Tuscarora — he count *Mohawks*."

"True. Are there any other red-men among them?"

"Oneida, so," holding up four fingers only; after which he held up a single finger, adding, "Onondaga, so."

"Twenty-two Mohawks, four Oneidas, and a single Onondaga, make twenty-seven in all.

To these, how many whites am I to add? You counted them also?"

The Indian now showed both hands, with all the fingers extended, repeating the gestures four times; then he showed one hand entire, and two fingers on the other.

"Forty-seven. Add these to the red-skins, and we get seventy-four for the total. I had supposed them rather stronger than this, Wyandotté?"

"No stronger—no weaker—just so. Good many ole womans, too, among pale-faces."

"Old women!—You are not speaking literally, Nick? All that I have seen appear to be men."

"Got beard; but ole woman, too. Talk—talk—talk; do not'in.' *Dat* what Injin call ole woman. Party, poor party; cap'in beat 'em, if he fight like ole time."

"Well, this is encouraging, Wilhelmina; and Nick seems to be dealing fairly with us."

"Now, inquire more about Robert, Hugh," said the wife, in whose maternal heart her children were always uppermost.

"You hear, Nick; my wife is desirous of learning something about her son, next."

During the preceding dialogue there had been something equivocal in the expression of the Indian's face. Every word he uttered about the party, its numbers, and his own manner of falling in with it, was true, and his countenance indicated that he was dealing fairly. Still, the captain fancied that he could detect a covert fierceness in his eye and air, and he felt uneasiness even while he yielded him credence. As soon as Mrs. Willoughby, however, interposed, the gleam of ferocity, that passed so naturally and readily athwart the swarthy features of the savage, melted into a look of gentleness, and there were moments when it might be almost termed softness.

"Good to have moder," said Nick kindly. "Wyandotté got no squaw—wife dead, moder dead, sister dead—all gone to land of spirits—by 'm bye, chief follow. No one throw stone on his grave! Been on death-path long ago, but cap'in's squaw say 'Stop, Nick; little too soon now; take medicine, and get well.' Squaw made to do good. Chief alway like 'e squaw, when his mind not wild with war."

"And *your* mind, Wyandotté, is not wild with war now," answered Mrs. Willoughby earnestly. "You will help a mother, then, to get her son out of the hands of merciless enemies?"

"Why you t'ink merciless? Because pale-face dress like Injin, and try to cheat?"

"That may be one reason; but I fear there are many others. Tell me, Wyandotté, how came you to discover that Robert was a prisoner, and by what means did he contrive to give you his letter?"

The Indian assumed a look of pride, a little blended with hauteur; for he felt that he was manifesting the superiority of a red-man over the pale-face as he related the means through which he had made his discoveries.

"Read book on ground," Nick answered gravely. "Two book alway open before chief; one in sky, t'other on ground. Book in sky tell weather—snow, rain, wind, thunder, lightning, war: book on ground tell what happen."

"And what had this book on the ground to do with my son, Wyandotté?"

"Tell all about him. Major's trail first seen—

at mill. No moccasin—much boot. Soldier boot like letter—say great deal in few word. First t'ink it cap'in; but it too short. Den *know* it Major."

"This sounds very well, Nick," interrupted the captain, "though you will excuse me if I say it is going a little too far. It seems impossible that you should know that the print of the foot was that of my son. How *could* you be certain of this?"

"How *could*, eh? Who follow trail from house, here, to Hudson river? T'ink Nick blind, and can't see? Tuscarora read *his* book well as pale-face read bible." Here Nick looked round him a moment, raised his forefinger, dropped his voice, and added earnestly, — "see him at Bunker Hill — know him among ten, six, two t'ousand warrior. Know dat foot, if meet him in Happy Hunting Ground."

"And why my son's foot, in particular? The boot is often changed, can never be exactly like its predecessor, and one boot is so much like another that to me the thing seems impossible.

This account of the boot, Nick, makes me distrust your whole story."

"What distrust!" demanded the Indian, like lightning.

"It means doubt, uncertainty—distrust."

"Don't believe, ha?"

"Yes, that is it, substantially. Don't more than *half* believe, perhaps, would be nearer to the mark."

"Why, ole soldier alway distrust; squaw nebber? Ask moder—ha!—you t'ink Nick don't know son's trail—handsome trail, ilke young chief's?"

"I can really believe Nick might recognise Bob's trail, Hugh," expostulated Mrs. Willoughby. "He has a foot in a thousand—you may remember how every one was accustomed to speak of his beautiful foot even when he was a boy. As a man, I think it still more remarkable."

"Ay, go on, Nick, in this way, and my wife will believe all you say. There is no distrust in a mother's partiality, certainly. You are an old courtier, and would make your way at St. James's"

"Major nebber tell about foot?" asked Nick earnestly.

"I remember nothing; and had he spoken of any such thing, I must have heard it. But never mind the story, now; you saw the foot-print, and knew it for my son's. Did you ask to be admitted to his prison? or was your intercourse secret?"

"Wyandotté too wise to act like squaw, or boy. See him widout look. Talk, widout speak—hear, widout ear. Major write letter, Nick take him. All done by eye and hand not'in' done by tongue, or at Council Fire. Mohawk blind like owl!"

"May I believe you, Tuscarora; or, incited by demons, do you come to deceive me?"

"Ole warrior look two time before he go; t'ink ten time before he say yes. All good. Nick no affronted. Do so himself, and t'ink it right. Cap'in *may* believe all Nick say."

"Father!" cried Maud with simple energy, "I will answer for the Indian's honesty. He has guided Robert so often, and been with him in so many trying scenes, he never *can* have the

heart to betray him, or us. Trust him, then; he may be of infinite service."

Even Captain Willoughby, little disposed as he was to judge Nick favourably, was struck with the gleam of manly kindness that shot across the dark face of the Indian, as he gazed at the glowing cheek and illuminated countenance of the ardent and beautiful girl.

"Nick seems disposed to make a truce with *you* at least, Maud," he said smiling, "and I I shall now know where to look for a mediator, whenever any trouble arises between us."

"I have known Wyandotté, dear sir, from childhood, and he has ever been my friend. He promised me, in particular, to be true to Bob, and I am happy to say he has ever kept his word."

This was telling but half the story. Maud had made the Indian many presents, and most especially had she attended to his wants, when it was known he was to be the major's guide, the year previously, on his return to Boston. Nick had known her real father, and was present at his death. He was consequently acquainted with

her actual position in the family of the Hutted Knoll; and, what was of far more consequence in present emergencies, he had fathomed the depths of her heart, in a way our heroine could hardly be said to have done herself. Off her guard with such a being, Maud's solicitude, however, had betrayed her, and the penetrating Tuscarora had discerned that which had escaped the observation of father, and mother, and sister. Had Nick been a pale-face of the class of those with whom he usually associated, his discovery would have gone through the settlement with scoffings and exaggerations; but this forest gentleman, for such was Wyandotté, in spite of his degradation and numerous failings, had too much consideration to make a woman's affections the subject of his coarseness and merriment. The secrets of Maud would not have been more sacred with her own brother, had such a relative existed to become her confidant, than it was with Saucy Nick.

"Nick gal's friend," observed the Indian quietly; "dat enough; what Nick say Nick mean. What Nick *mean* he *do*. Come, cap'in; time to quit squaw, and talk about war."

At this hint, which was too plain to be misunderstood, Captain Willoughby made the Indian withdraw to the court, promising to follow him as soon as he could hold a short conference with Joyce, who was now summoned to the council. The subject of discussion was the manner in which the Tuscarora had passed the stockade, and the probability of his being true. The serjeant was disposed to distrust all red-men, and he advised putting Nick under arrest, and to keep him in durance, until the return of light, at least.

"I might almost say, your honour, that such are orders, sir. The advice to soldiers carrying on war with savages, tells us that the best course is to pay off treachery with treachery; and treachery is a red-skin's manual exercise. There is O'Hearn will make a capital sentinel, for the fellow is as true as the best steel in the army. Mr. Woods' room is empty, and it is so far out of the way that nothing will be easier than to keep the savage snug enough. Besides, by a little management, he might fancy we were doing him honour all the while."

"We will see, serjeant," answered the captain. "It has a bad appearance, and yet it may be the wisest thing we can do. Let us first go the rounds, taking Nick with us for safety, and determine afterwards."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

00076463

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 March, 2016